

Shahor quits in flap over Peres

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A senior Israeli general resigned on Friday after being suspended from his position as a key negotiator with the Palestinians for having held private meetings with opposition leader Shimon Peres. General Oren Shahor submitted his resignation as coordinator for Israeli military activities in the occupied territories to Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai at a meeting Friday morning, his spokesman said. Gen. Shahor had also headed the civilian affairs committee in negotiations with the Palestinians on extending autonomy to the West Bank city of Hebron but was suspended in November for having met privately with former Prime Minister Peres, without having informed his superiors. "General Shahor had waited for things to calm down a bit before leaving the army," spokesman Shlomo Dror told AFP. "He also wanted to wait for the negotiations on the army redeployment from Hebron, in which he had played a central role, to near completion," he said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by The Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية، الراي

U.S. invites Turkey to economic talks

ANKARA (AP) — The United States, which has made plain its concern about Turkey's moving closer economically to Iran, has invited a minister in Ankara's Islamic-led government for talks in Washington. A U.S. embassy official here, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Friday that State Minister Fehim Adak will hold follow-up talks to a series of discussions on the economy that U.S. and Turkish officials had in October. Mr. Adak, from Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's Islamic Welfare Party, oversees economic affairs in the cabinet and is a member of Turkey's privatisation board. Mr. Adak's aide Recep Ozdemir, said the minister's office had no information about a U.S. Treasury Department invitation or any plans by the minister to visit the United States. The foreign ministry also said it could not officially confirm Mr. Adak's visit either.

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Kabariti meets Algerian team

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti Friday received at his office an Algerian delegation representing the social security sector in Algeria, now on a visit to the Kingdom. The two sides discussed bilateral cooperation in all fields, particularly in the field of health. The Algerian side said it highly appreciated the Jordanian position and stand towards Algeria at all levels. Attending the audience were Minister of Health Aref Butaineh and Algerian Ambassador to Jordan Hamid Shbeirah.

Abdul Meguid to visit Jordan

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid will visit Amman for three days beginning Jan. 4 for talks with Jordanian officials, a league official said Friday. The talks will cover "recent peace process developments and ways of strengthening coordination between Arab countries," the official said.

Tourists abducted in Yemen - official

SANAA (R) — Several Dutch tourists have been kidnapped by tribesmen in Yemen, the second such case this month, a Yemeni official said on Friday. "We estimate that about two to four Dutch tourists were abducted on Thursday," the official told Reuters. "A strong military force has been sent to the area and we have surrounded the abductors," the official said. The official said the tourists were abducted in an area about 65 kilometres outside the capital Sanaa. Yemeni authorities on Dec. 19 freed five Dutch tourists who were briefly abducted by tribesmen while touring an area 240 kilometres north of Sanaa. In recent years, tribes in Yemen with grievances against the government or foreign oil firms have kidnapped tourists or other foreigners to use them as bargaining chips.

Mossad under probe in Bull killing

TEL AVIV (AP) — The Belgian government wants to question a former Mossad agent in the 1990 killing of an American scientist who allegedly worked on a long-range gun for Iraq at the time of his death, an Israeli newspaper said Friday. The Yediot Achronon newspaper said the Belgian government sent a request to Canadian authorities to question former Mossad agent Victor Ostrovsky, who now lives in Ottawa, about the death of Gerald Bull, an arms dealer and weapons expert. In one of his books about the Mossad, Mr. Ostrovsky wrote that two Mossad agents visited Bull shortly before his death to try and persuade him to stop working for the Iraqis. Bull refused and was later killed by the two agents, Mr. Ostrovsky wrote in his book. Excerpts from the written Belgian request, signed by a deputy head of a Brussels court, were published in Friday's Yediot. Bull was shot and killed when he opened the door of his Brussels apartment March 22, 1990. His killer has not been caught. The Belgian press speculated at the time that Israeli secret agents were involved in the killing. Belgian police ruled out robbery as a motive for his murder because more than \$20,000 were found in Bull's pockets. Mr. Ostrovsky told Yediot that the information on the Bull killing in his book was not first-hand, but came from a source inside the Mossad.

Israeli-Palestinian accord could be signed this week

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — An Israeli-Palestinian agreement on transferring most of the West Bank town of Hebron could be signed this week, officials said Friday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met senior Palestinian security officials Friday to try and resolve issues standing in the way of the transfer of Hebron to Palestinian rule. Mr. Netanyahu, accompanied by his chief security negotiator, General Shaul

Mofaz, cabinet secretary Danny Naveh and legal adviser Yitzhak Molkho, met the Palestinian officers at a Jerusalem hotel following the weekly cabinet meeting. The Palestinian delegation included the heads of the West Bank and Gaza Strip secret service units, colonels Jibril Rajoub and Mohammad Dahlan, and chief security negotiator General Abdul Razak Yahya. The talks were also attended by U.S. Ambassador Martin Indyk who has been standing in for U.S. mediator Dennis Ross, who left Thursday to brief

the West Bank city. Mr. Indyk replied "I hope so." Meanwhile, chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat met separately in Jerusalem with Netanyahu policy adviser Dore Gold to work on the wording of an annex agreement spelling out steps to be taken by the two sides following a Hebron redeployment. "We have instructions to conclude the agreement by the end of the year and we hope to do this," Mr. Erakat told AFP as he headed into those talks. "But there are still major difficulties in both the security and civilian areas," he

said. Gen. Yahya, Col. Rajoub and Col. Dahlan met late Thursday with Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

Mr. Netanyahu, meanwhile, faced growing dissent from within his own right-wing camp over the planned handover of Hebron to Palestinian rule. But with strong support from key ministers and the backing of the political opposition, Mr. Netanyahu appeared able to weather the mutiny both within his cabinet and the deeply divided parliament, at least for now.

Critics of the withdrawal plan being negotiated with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) claim it will leave the settlers in the city open to attack by hardliners among Hebron's 120,000 Palestinians. At best, they say, the deal will condemn the settlers to life in an armed camp surrounded by Israeli troops with no hope of expanding their community. While Mr. Netanyahu's government is not threatened in the short term by the mutiny on his far right, growing dissatisfaction with his perceived failure to

(Continued on page 7)

King, Mubarak and Netanyahu likely to visit Washington in early 1997, U.S. officials say

Clinton pleased by progress on Hebron

Officials reject report of Holbrooke replacing Ross

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — With a deal on Hebron close at hand, President Bill Clinton is planning to invite Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu here early next year to coordinate further peace moves on the West Bank.

Visits will be arranged also for King Hussein and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who have made peace with Israel and want to see it extended in the region, U.S. officials said Thursday. Dates have not been set, but February appears to be the likely month for the visits. By then, Mr. Clinton will have been sworn in for his second term and, assuming Senate confirmation, Madeleine Albright will have taken over as secretary of state.

"It's only natural the prime minister see the president at the start of a new term and meet with the new secretary of state as well," an Israeli diplomat said. Two U.S. officials, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, concurred.

West Bank town to future Israeli withdrawals to which Israel already is committed in interim agreements with the Palestinian National Authority. Details must be worked out, though.

Mr. Clinton and his Middle East policy-makers hope the Hebron agreement will revitalise Arab-Israeli peacemaking. Talks between Israel and Syria have been suspended, without any indication of an early resumption, while Mr. Netanyahu has given little signs of being ready to yield on Palestinian aspirations for a state with its capital in Jerusalem.

Mr. Clinton brought Mr. Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to Washington in September hoping to prod them into an agreement on Hebron, and also to find a formula for broader Middle East talks.

The two Middle East leaders met face-to-face, and while no agreements emerged, Mr. Netanyahu said a new level of trust had been reached while Mr. Clinton appealed for patience in the days ahead. "Please, please give us a chance to make things work," he urged.

Mr. Ross told the president about "the work he has undertaken to help move the parties to an agreement on Hebron so they can move to the important work that lies beyond the Hebron talks," a White House spokeswoman, April Melody, said. She said Mr. Clinton was pleased with the progress.

The top-level U.S. review of Mr. Ross' effort came amid reports from the Middle East that Mr. Arafat expected a Hebron deal to be signed on Dec. 30 or 31. Palestinian officials who declined to be identified said Mr. Arafat announced the dates while briefing Palestinian lawmakers in Ramallah on the negotiations with Israel.

Mr. Clinton was "pleased by the progress" reported by Mr. Ross and gave the envoy "instructions on how to proceed when he returns to the region" over the weekend or early next week, spokeswoman Melody told reporters.

In a related development, a senior U.S. official denied a report by syndicated columnist Rowland Evans and Robert Novak that Richard Holbrooke might replace Mr. Ross. "There's no substance to that report," the official said.

Mr. Holbrooke, who as an assistant secretary of state negotiated the Bosnia peace accord in November 1995, has been working since February as an investment banker in New York.



Prisoners freed on Friday under a special Royal amnesty say goodbye to those left behind at Naour jail (Al Ra'i photo)

More survivors from Saudi accident to be discharged from hospital today

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — More survivors of a road accident in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday that claimed the lives of 13 Jordanians, most of them women and children in, in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday are expected to be released from hospital, a hospital official at King Hussein Medical Centre said on Friday.

The accident which involved a Saudi bus with mostly Jordanian women and children, occurred in the Tariff area, 52 kilometres west of Arar town in Saudi Arabia. Two Saudi nationals were also killed.

Twenty-eight people were injured in the accident and were first treated at an Arar hospital and were later taken by Jordanian military helicopters to King Hussein

Medical Centre in Jordan.

Survivors and witnesses of the accident said that the bus veered off course, after one of its tyres burst. It struck the dividing sector of the highway, rolled over several times before resting in the desert near the edge of the road.

His Royal Highness Prince Faisal travelled to Saudi Arabia on Wednesday and supervised the rescue operation, and accompanied the injured on their way back to Amman.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, received the survivors upon their return on Wednesday at Marka military airport, and instructed the concerned authorities that the victims receive the appropriate care and treatment.

The Prince also offered condolences to the families of the deceased.

Also receiving the injured were Prince Rashid Bin Al Hassan, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and

other government officials.

On Thursday, 11 of the 21 patients admitted to King Hussein Medical Centre were discharged. Officials at the hospital said that seven people being treated at the hospital will be released next week.

An official at Queen Alia military hospital where three children were admitted on Wednesday told the Jordan Times that the three were discharged on Thursday.

Prince Hassan sent cables to Saudi King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah thanking them and the Saudi government for their concern and assistance they provided for the injured in the accident.

The Prince also offered condolences for the Saudi government over the death of the two Saudi passengers.

Three of the victims were buried in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday. The remaining ten were laid to rest Thursday and Friday in Amman, Ma'an, Irbid and Karak.

France quits allied N. Iraq watch

PARIS (Agencies) — France said on Friday it was withdrawing from an allied air reconnaissance operation over the Kurdistan area of northern Iraq in which it has participated since the 1991 Gulf war.

A foreign ministry statement said France would, however, continue to take part in a similar air watch over southern Iraq with U.S. and British aircraft.

The statement said Paris was withdrawing from the Kurdistan operation, dubbed "Provide Comfort," because it would no longer contain a humanitarian aspect.

An official Iraqi newspaper, anticipating the French decision, wrote on Friday: "The French move would enhance ties...with Iraq not only on the political level, but by boosting comprehensive relations

that both sides are willing to bring back to their past (pre-Gulf war) level.

"The French move would lead the world to drive the fact that the activities of the 'hammer force' are illegal," said Al Thawra, organ of the ruling Baath Party.

Paris, eager to help exploit Iraqi oil resources, has courted Baghdad and pressed for an end to United Nations trade sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The White House in Washington had said on Wednesday it was confident Paris would continue to take part in the operation, aimed at halting Iraqi flights from the area.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry said the same day that France had raised objections to the operation as it was being reorganised from the

start of next year.

The French withdrawal was expected to add to an increasing list of disagreements between Paris and Washington which has led to sharp exchanges between officials of the two countries.

France and the United States have been at odds this month over the U.S. command of NATO forces in southern Europe. French objections to the appointment of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and a perceived diplomatic snub of outgoing Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

The new patrols are a follow-on to Operation Provide Comfort, whose mandate runs out on Dec. 31. The Turkish parliament voted on Wednesday to let the new patrols begin on Jan. 1 from a base in Turkey.

G-7 rules out concessions to end Lima crisis

PARIS (Agencies) — The Group of Seven (G-7) industrialised countries on Friday demanded the release of all the hostages in the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima and ruled out any concessions in the face of terrorist activities.

The G-7 nations said no political or ideological objective could justify recourse to terrorism, according to a communique issued by the French presidency.

The G-7 statement said the member countries "demand the immediate release of all the hostages without exception and condemn in the firmest possible manner the action perpetrated

by terrorists at the residence of the Japanese ambassador to Peru."

The document was drawn up at a meeting of Lima ambassadors of the G-7 countries — Britain, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Japan and the United States — and Russia.

It said: "No political or ideological objective can justify recourse to such methods."

The "right" expressed solidarity with the Peruvian government and assured it of their support "in its efforts to resolve the crisis in a peaceful manner with the first objective being to save human lives."

President Fujimori of Peru had previously ruled out the use

of force to end the standoff that began Dec. 17 when rebels of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (TARM) stormed the Japanese embassy residence during a gala reception, taking hundreds of hostages. So far, the hostage-takers have released more than 550 of their captives, and continue to hold 103.

The ambassadors' statement said the G-7 countries and Russia were "ready, individually and collectively to assist the Peruvian government in pursuing into operation all appropriate means that it might request."

France has the chair of the G-7, otherwise known as the G-8 when Russia is included, until the end of the year.

Prisoner release begins

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The authorities on Friday started the release of prisoners under an amnesty granted by His Majesty King Hussein on his birthday, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

The agency said the first batch of prisoners covered under the amnesty were freed from Naour jail. It did not say how many prisoners were freed. But sources told the Jordan Times eight people were freed and all those had been jailed for dodging military service.

The Council of Ministers have forwarded to the King two lists of prisoners who qualify for release under certain parameters laid down by the government upon the recommendations of a technical committee. The first list includes 107 names and the second 114. Justice Minister Abdul Karim Dughmi said last week.

"Most of those in the two lists are draft dodgers, and further lists are being drawn up" after scrutiny by the technical committee, an official source told the Jordan Times.

It was not immediately known when further lists would be ready for submission to the King. More than 1,200 cases are expected to be closely studied by the technical committee.

Mr. Dughmi, the justice minister, was quoted as saying by Al Ra'i, said the release of amnestied prisoners would come in batches.

Families of those released on Friday voiced gratitude and thanks to King Hussein for his pardon and pledged continued allegiance to the Hashemite Throne, Petra said.

The government has refuted allegations that electioneering by members of the Council of Ministers were delaying the release of prisoners.

It has also rejected the notion that the amnesty was a general pardon and noted that the Nov. 12 Royal decree granting it made it clear that it was a "special amnesty" and authorised the government to set the parameters that qualify prisoners for release.

"The procedures for the release of prisoners under the amnesty are on the right course" Information Minister Marwan Muasher said last week.

The Royal pardon appeared to be mainly targeted at people arrested after the mid-August riots

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Arab Israelis seek equality

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's Arabs live a paradox, carrying passports of a state proclaiming equality for all yet created as a homeland for the Jewish people.

"Something is still rotten in the State of Israel," Arab Israeli professor Said Zaydani told his largely Jewish audience, apologising for his corruption of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

"To be an Arab in this state means to be discriminated and separated," Mr. Zaydani, a political philosopher, told a recent Tel Aviv University symposium on Arab politics in Israel.

"This rottenness must be uprooted."

Israel's one million Arabs, some 18 per cent of the population, have long complained the Jewish majority treats them as a fifth column, depriving them of jobs and benefits contingent on service in the Jewish state's army from which they are exempt.

"They also object to what they complain is inadequate government funding of their schools, villages and towns."

One statistic captures their plight: Israel's central bureau of statistics says 31.2 per cent of "non-Jewish" families were under the poverty line in 1995, nearly double the 16.8 per cent of all Israeli families classified as poor.

For many Israeli Arabs — or Palestinian Israelis, as they prefer to be known — the struggle for equality is a fight for budgets on par with those of Jewish cities and institutions.

But Mr. Zaydani argues Arabs will never enjoy equal opportunity and decision-making power in a country which, while a democracy proclaiming rights for all, defines itself as a Jewish national state. "I am in a grey area between subject and citizen," he said.

For Mr. Zaydani and a new generation of Arab thinkers, the fight for equality exceeds demands to merely shrink economic gaps between Arabs and Jews. Israel, he told his uneasy audience, must be transformed from the "Jewish State" into a "state of all its citizens."

"An Israeli identity for all," he declared. "If this is fulfilled I will have no problem being an Israeli as a member of a liberal, secular, democratic country."

But Haifa university professor Sammy Smooha, an Arab Israeli who has tracked his community's political views in 20 years of surveys, said there was only narrow support for Mr. Zaydani's ideas.

"Over the years, the Arabs in Israel are becoming less

and less rejecting of the Jewish national state," Mr. Smooha told Reuters.

He said the percentage of Israeli Arabs who opposed Israel as a "Jewish, Zionist State" dropped from 57 per cent in 1980 to 35 per cent in 1995. Those Arabs who called themselves "anti-Zionist" nearly halved from 47 per cent in 1988 to 25 per cent in 1995.

"Israelisation," Mr. Smooha said, was strong among Israel's Arabs.

Mr. Zaydani partly concurred: "Most Arabs in Israel have decided they want to remain part and parcel of the state of Israel. But such a decision is conditional: I want to be wholeheartedly Israeli."

Jewish academics argued the call for a "new Israeli identity" would strip Jews of their right to shape their national destiny.

"The state of Israel was set up to give the Jewish people national self-determination," Hebrew University professor Ruth Gavison told the conference. "It is legitimate that those who came here for a Jewish state do not want a 'state of all its citizens'."

Ms. Gavison conceded that Israel, despite its pluralistic tendencies, gave only "lip service" to equality of citizenship.

But she insisted Israel could be both Jewish and an inclusive liberal democracy: "It all depends on how we see democracy and how we see Judaism or Jewishness."

Alouph Hareven, co-director of the Sikuy Association for the advancement of Equal Opportunity, said: "A country that doesn't respect the rights of all its citizens is not a Jewish state."

Jewish academics argued that the Arab clamour for equal citizenship for each Israeli was misleading.

"I don't see the Arabs as wishing to have a state for all its citizens — but for all its nations... They want rights not only as individuals but as a collective," Ms. Gavison said.

Mr. Zaydani himself paired his call for uniform citizenship with a demand for jurisdictional autonomy for Israel's Arabs. Autonomy, he explained, would meet their "impulse for national fulfilment."

Mr. Smooha said 81 per cent of Israel's Arabs desired "some form" of autonomy, in effect turning Israel into a binational state.

Hebrew University professor Yehoshua Porath, citing French Canadian demands to split the province of Quebec from liberal Canada, said Israeli Arab autonomy would lead to separatism.



ARRESTED: Palestinians who were detained after several petrol bombs were thrown at a Jewish settlement in the heart of Hebron chat with Israeli soldiers guarding them on Friday. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met on Friday with Palestinian security officials to close a deal on a long-overdue Israeli troop pull-back from Hebron (see page 1)

Egyptian police arrest 40 Muslim Brothers

CAIRO (Agencies) — Egyptian police on Thursday detained 40 members of the outlawed and influential Muslim Brotherhood organisation on charges of plotting ways to spread their ideology, sources at the prosecutor's office said.

They said the men — doctors, lawyers and college students — were picked up at the Cairo suburb of Helwan and the near-by town of Tibein. Six students were released temporarily to sit for their college exams, the sources said.

The prosecution is interrogating the group members who are charged with using the headquarters of the opposition Labour Party in Helwan and Tibein to "plot and plan ways to penetrate labour and student unions to spread their ideology."

Police also seized leaflets spelling out the group's goals, the sources added.

The Muslim Brotherhood is Egypt's oldest fundamentalist Islamist group.

The group is seeking to transform the country into a strict Islamic state by political means and has been keen to distance itself from the Muslim militant group fighting to overthrow the government.

The organisation was tolerated in the past but Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has in recent years equated them to the Muslim militants trying to oust his rule since 1992. Almost 1,000 people have been killed in the political violence.

Egypt has jailed several prominent members of the Brotherhood, rounding up several before parliamentary elections in November 1995.

The six freed after being arrested on Thursday were Cairo University students, the source said.

"The prosecutors took into consideration that they must pass their first-term exams in a few days and let them out on bail." Earlier in the day prosecutors decided

to detain for two weeks the other 34.

The 40 suspects were arrested "with large quantities of leaflets and publications containing their extremist ideas which are hostile" to the government, a judicial official said.

They were planning to "distribute them notably to students in order to organise demonstrations hostile to the authorities and to incite disorder to relaunch the movement's extremist activity."

Brotherhood spokesman Maamun Hodeiby, questioned by AFP, said the authorities were trying "to intimidate the Brotherhood before the (municipal) elections" expected to be held early next year.

"The Muslim Brothers don't have any intention of getting involved in these elections but it is possible that members will be candidates in an individual capacity," he said.

Mr. Hodeiby said that "before the November 1995

legislative elections the Muslim Brothers were the victims of a huge wave of arrests."

Eighty-five Muslim Brothers have been brought before the high military court in Cairo and 54 were given sentences of up to five years in prison.

The only Muslim Brother who ran for office in a district near Helwan, parliamentary member Ali Fahd Al Bab, said the leaflets confiscated from the 40 arrested members were "fabricated by the security services."

No formal charges have been brought against those arrested, who include doctors, lawyers, university and high school students, and members of local municipal councils.

The arrests follow recent warnings by Interior Minister Hassan Al Ali that he will put a stop to any attempt to cause trouble during the campaign for municipal council elections to be held in four months.

Ankara said to have used gangster for secret missions

ANKARA (R) — A senior intelligence officer has testified to a parliamentary inquiry that Turkey used a fugitive far-right gangster to carry out secret missions abroad, the head of the commission said.

"He told the commission that the state used Abdullah Catli abroad from 1983," Member of Parliament (MP) Mehmet Elkanis, who chairs the commission, told the ATV television station late on Thursday.

Turkish newspapers said intelligence officer Mehmet Eymur told the commission that Catli worked abroad for the MIT intelligence service. He did not specify what tasks Catli carried out.

Catli, convicted in France and Switzerland of drug smuggling, died in a car crash on Nov. 3 that brought to light links between officials and underworld figures.

A senior policeman and government MP were travelling in the same car as Catli, wanted for murder in Turkey since 1978. The scandal forced the interior minister to quit last month.

Papers said Mr. Eymur, the head of MIT's anti-terror unit, told the commission that the intelligence service cut its relation with Catli when it became aware of his drug dealings.

"We gave him up and national police headquarters took him and began to use him," the Hurriyet daily quoted Mr. Eymur as saying.

The Turkish media has accused Catli of involvement in the killing of an Armenian guerrilla leader in Athens in 1988 and leadership of a gang that allegedly killed Kurdish rebel sympathisers and business rivals in the 1990s.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Former head of Egyptian journalists dies at 80

CAIRO (AP) — Hafez Mahmoud, a former head of the Egyptian journalists syndicate, has died of pneumonia at age 80. Egypt's Middle East News Agency reported he died Thursday night after being hospitalised earlier in the day with bronchitis, which developed into pneumonia. Mahmoud became secretary-general of the syndicate, a professional union for journalists, in 1941. He was elected its head in 1964 and served until 1967. He was editor-in-chief of Al Siyash newspaper in the 1940s, then became editor-in-chief of Al Qahira newspaper in 1953. He had worked as a journalist with the daily Al Gumhuriyah since 1960.

Assad sends younger brother to French exile — report

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad has exiled his younger brother Jamil to France, because his illegal activities drew protests from Syrian and foreign business leaders, a press report said. Citing "very well-informed" diplomats in Paris, the Kuwaiti newspaper Al Rai Al Am said in its Friday edition that Jamil's family and close friends had been forced to join him in France. Jamil Al Assad arrived in Paris on Sunday, the paper said. Syrian officials contacted by the paper confirmed that Jamil had left Syria. His son-in-law, Qussai Aslan, who heads a big state-owned construction company, was fired, the source added. Jamil Al Assad, a former member of the Syrian parliament, owned a shipping company and a trading company. The report said Jamil and his sons Fawaz and Munzer were involved "in a number of illegal activities in Syrian seaside towns." The Syrian president's eldest son, Bassel, had put an end to the activities of his uncle and the latter's sons before he died in January 1994, the paper said, adding that those activities resumed after Bassel's death. Another son of the Syrian leader, Bashar, has been lashed with fighting corruption in the country, according to Al Rai Al Am.

2 Lebanese jailed for libelling King Fahd

BEIRUT (AFP) — A Beirut court has sentenced the owner and director of a Lebanese weekly magazine to two months in jail for libelling Saudi Arabia's King Fahd, judicial sources said Friday. Judge Aff Shamseddine, chief magistrate of the publications court, also fined Al Kifah Al Arabi owner Walid Hussein and the magazine's director, Taleb Hussein Abdullah, 50 million Lebanese pounds (\$32,000) Thursday. Mr. Hussein and Mr. Abdullah, who were free pending an appeal, were found guilty of libelling the Saudi monarch in a 1995 article titled: "What if we get a Sri Lankan custodian for Jerusalem." Mr. Hussein and Mr. Abdullah were tried under article 23 of Lebanese publication law which allows lawsuits against editors, journalists and printers for libelling, insulting or humiliating foreign presidents, monarchs and heads of state.

Rights group voices concern over Lebanon detentions

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A human rights group Thursday expressed concern for dozens of people detained in a recent roundup by Lebanese authorities and called for the release of those not promptly charged.

Human Rights Watch/Middle East, in a letter to Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, highlighted the case of Wa'el Khairi, who it said appeared to have been detained "because of his organisation's efforts to expose the human rights violations that were occurring during the roundup."

Mr. Khairi is director of the Foundation for Human and Humanitarian Rights. Human Rights Watch also urged that

Mr. Hariri investigate reports that Mr. Khairi "had come under pressure" to sign a statement that he and his fellow detainees had been well-treated.

It said the crackdown began after a Dec. 18 attack on a van carrying Syrian workers north of Beirut. The subsequent detentions have focused on members of the Christian anti-Syrian opposition.

Human Rights Watch said the detainees have been held at the ministry of defence "without charge and without access to lawyers" and called for the release of "all those who are not promptly charged with a recognisable offense."

JORDAN TELEVISION

14:05 The Adventures of Mickey and Donald
14:30 Circus and Safety at Work
15:00 Doc. — La France Aux Mille Villages
15:30 Fete des Bebes
16:00 Sports — Gillespie
16:30 Chris Cross
17:00 News Flash
17:02 Futures
17:15 Drama — Blue Heelers
18:00 Series — Jack
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Magazine — Ziva
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Something Wilder
20:00 Doc. — Superstars of Action
20:30 Prism
21:10 Lois and Clarke
22:00 News in English
22:25 Best Seller — Devices and Desires
23:15 Feature Film: "Lili"

PRAYER TIMES

05:07 Fajr
06:29 Sunrise
11:37 Dhuhr
14:21 Asr
16:44 Maghreb
18:06 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifheh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661656

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Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
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Armanan International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 08/18
Aqaba 11/25
Deserts 06/19
Jordan Valley 10/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 19, Aqaba 26 Humidity readings: Amman 34 per cent, Aqaba 36 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY AMMAN:
Dr. Khalil Al Tustiq 757253
Dr. Bahjat Bader 832642
Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 830432
Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi 893542
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir 276852
Al Quds pharmacy 1-1
ZARQA:
Dr. Tareq Hijawi 985445
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 621111
637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813815/2
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 6672779
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashraf 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602340/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09983323
Zarqa National Hospital 09900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 09986732
Al Hikam Modern Hospital 09990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 021275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 021272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital 021247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 03314111

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ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
06:15 Osaka, Bangkok, Dubai (add) (RJ)
08:55 Damascus (RJ)
09:30 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
09:45 New Delhi (RJ)
09:55 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 Colombo (RJ)
14:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:40 London, Berlin (RJ)
19:35 Vienna (RJ)
19:55 Vienna (add) (RJ)
21:55 Rome (add) (RJ)
22:30 Lamaca (RJ)
02:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
05:35 Bangkok (RJ)
07:35 Osaka, Bangkok, Dubai (add) (RJ)
08:50 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
12:40 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
18:15 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
21:00 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:20 Lamaca (CY)
22:25 Beirut (ME)
23:35 Cairo (MS)

23:40 Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
23:50 London (KL)
01:00 London, Damascus (BA)
03:45 Rome (AZ)
06:20 Tel Aviv (LY)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
09:20 Aqaba (RW)
18:55 Sharm Al Sheikh (RW)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (add) (RJ)
11:00 Vienna (add) (RJ)
11:05 Vienna (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30 Rome (add) (RJ)
11:50 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
12:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:15 Cairo (RJ)
20:00 Bombay (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 Lamaca (RJ)
21:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
00:15 Riyadh, Dhahran (add) (RJ)
08:45 Marka, Aqaba (RJ)

Other Flights
00:15 Damascus, Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Beirut, Athens (OA)
07:00 Beirut (ME)
13:30 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
19:15 Dubai (EK)
23:10 Lamaca (CY)

23:30 Cairo (MS)
23:55 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (AF)
00:40 Amsterdam (KL)
04:35 Rome (AZ)
06:30 London (KL)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
20:30 Aqaba (RW)

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Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

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Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 700/500
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Banana (imported) 850/600
Cabbage 70/50
Carrot 300/150
Cauliflower 130/100
Cucumber (large) 120/80
Cucumber (small) 270/180
Eggplant 150/80
Garlic 850/600
Grape fruit 150/100
Lemon 400/300
Marrow (large) 80/40
Marrow (small) 140/100
Onion (green) 160/100
Onion (dry) 170/80
Orange 580/400
Pepper (hot) 240/150
Pepper (sweet) 240/150
Potato 270/160
Spinach 140/100
String Bean 380/300
Tomato 150/120



Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, shares a smile with members of the Christian Community in a visit to the Roman Catholic Bishopric (photo by Boghns)

Regent stresses spiritual side of nation's youth

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Friday called for directing special attention to the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the young generation "at a time when we are approaching the end of this century and the beginning of a new millennium".

He said that catering to today's needs and aspirations as well as those of future generations is a sacred duty and a message which should prompt us to move ahead and not allow lassitude to infiltrate our souls nor forgive our absence from the global community.

The Crown Prince said that Jordan has played an active role in the international and regional arenas and he underlined Jordanian efforts to end fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

He confirmed that these efforts were aimed at safeguarding the principles of peace and fraternity.

Prince Hassan also called

for further studies and dialogue aimed at supporting the region and improving its image in the Western world. He said Muslims and Christians share major responsibilities for the holy sites.

Prince Hassan was accompanied on the visit to the Roman Catholic Bishopric by His Majesty King Hussein's Advisor for Religious Affairs Sheikh Izzeddin Al Khatib Al Tamimi, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Abdul Salam Al Ahbadi and President of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research Al al Bait Foundation Nassereddin Al Assad.

Lower House of Parliament expected to endorse budget today

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament is expected today to endorse a JD 1,916 billion draft budget for 1997 after the government responds to lawmakers' remarks made during the four-day session.

A total of 38 deputies have thus far expressed their views concerning the budget, and five more are expected to take the floor, before the House votes on the budget, which projects an 11.1 per cent increase over the current one.

The House commenced its draft budget debate after hearing the finance committee report which expressed approval of the government's economic reform policies and urged the Cabinet to exert more efforts to ensure a realisation of the goals of the economic reform programme.

In its report, the committee stated that the 1996-98 reform programme aims at increasing the Kingdom's self-sufficiency, reducing consumption, increasing revenues, reducing borrowing and achieving a 6.5 per cent growth rate in the gross domestic product (GDP).

The committee, which recommended that the House endorse the draft budget, also noted that the programme aims at increasing exports by 8.8 per cent and reducing the budget deficit by three per cent in relation to the GDP.

However, the committee stated that the draft budget allows for an expenditure increase of 15 per cent as compared to the previous budget and that this increase contradicts the goals of the reform programme as well as the government's pledge to decrease public expenditure.

The committee also criticised the government for allocating expenditures for the purchase of equipment which, they maintained, will not lead to a growth in the GDP.

It also urged the government to reduce these expenditures, a call which was echoed by a number of deputies during the House debate regarding the draft budget. The House has the constitutional right to decrease spending but cannot amend the budget to allow for an expenditure increase.

Deputies, who debated the draft budget in the past few days, demanded that the government pursue policies aimed at helping the Kingdom reach self-sufficiency and ensure a social security network for its citizens.

Some lawmakers, however, opined that the draft budget will not increase productivity of the Kingdom's economy and that it further completely depends on tax collections.

The deputies also demanded increased measures to control alleged corruption, improve state bureaucracy and cut what they termed unnecessary spending.

Several lawmakers demanded that an "independent body" be established to fight corruption. The government has already set up a department for combating corruption affiliated with the General Intelligence Department.

Urging the government to imple-

ment efforts to resolve poverty and unemployment, deputies stressed the need for "building the state of institutions" and achieving economic and political reform.

Lawmakers, who also made demands for service improvements in their respective constituencies, asked the government

to ensure "fairness" in public sector appointments and expenditures.

They also demanded that the government decrease bread prices which were hiked last August. The government has already affirmed that it will lower the bread prices in view of reduced wheat prices on

lawmakers to help investors launch projects in the Kingdom. He called for increased agricultural focus as a means to resolve economic problems and to stop importing fruits and vegetables unless there is a break in domestic production.

Deputy Mohammad Huneiti from Amman, called for the provision of food security and the implementation of a national strategy to promote agricultural activities through building dams and wells. He also asked the government to treat all people equally and without regional bias in distributing services and facilities.

Islamic Action Front Deputy from Irbid Abdul Rahim Ekour called for setting up small industries in the rural and badia areas to fight poverty and unemployment. He voiced suspicion of external and foreign interference in Jordan's internal affairs under the auspices of the privatisation process. He opined that foreign investment should be restricted and that Jordan's attempts to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) be based on scientific principles as the WTO is an open market with stiff competition.

Islamic Action Front Deputy from Balqa called on the government to help and extend loans to improve the farmers' situations.

Deputy Talal Obeidat from Irbid said that the economic programme and privatisation will bring nothing to Jordan but crises and economic imbalances.

Deputy Mohammad Zaben from Amman suggested converting community colleges to polytechnical or vocational ones in order to supply the Jordanian market with a trained labour force.

Deputy Suleiman Saad from Jerash called for lifting various subsidies for people who earn a monthly income of JD 500 or higher.

Deputy Hani Masalhab Abaddi from Balqa called for supporting the agricultural sector and financial assistance to municipalities.

Deputy Hatem Ghazawi from Irbid called unemployment and poverty severe and still too high.

Deputy Tawfiq Kreishan from Ma'an urged the government to reconsider long-term policies to handle unemployment, describing it as on the rise in southern Jordan.

Deputy Abdullah Akhu Irshaid from Ma'arra called for recruiting youth in order to decrease unemployment.

Deputy Samir Habashneh from Karak called for cancelling farmers' debts to the government.

Deputy Jamil Hishoub from Karak requested that the government not support financially what he termed as "unsuccessful projects" which, he claimed, cost millions of budgeted dinars.

Amman Deputy Abu Zant called for the reclamation of land to increase agricultural production

the international market.

Parliamentary sources expected 50 out of the 80 members of Parliament to vote in favour of the budget. They estimated that 23 deputies will voice against the budget and the rest are expected to abstain.

and to support the construction of a central lab at the Al Hussein Medical City as well as a children's hospital.

Islamic Action Front Deputy Mohammad Alhaj from Zarqa advised Parliament to restructure programmes to combat poverty, unemployment and monopolies as well as to increase financing of the National Aid Fund (NAF) and to encourage international investments in the private sector.

Deputy Abdul Raouf Rawahdeh from Irbid delineated privatisation as a "logical step" and in accordance with the current state of the global economy. He stated that any inadequacy of the current legislation in dealing properly with negative effects of privatisation was due to the inadequacy of the taxing system. He advised a division between economic and political powers.

Deputy Abdul Baki Gamo from Zarqa emphasised the importance of justice and equality concerning rights and obligations.

Deputy Abdul Majeed Aqtash from Madaba maintained social and economic equilibria as synonymous. He also stressed the importance of opposition groups, as a national right, in the decision-making process and stated that this strengthens the nation.

Deputy Ali Sbat from Balqa emphasised adequately subsidising university funds in order to keep pace with current technological innovations. He also stated his opposition to the increase of higher education tuition fees as they might negatively impact indigent students.

Deputy Taha Hababibah from Ma'an stressed the importance of depending on national resources and the development of self-sufficient industries in lieu of depending on grants and other forms of external aid.

Deputy Fawaz Zubi from Ramtha pointed out that national imports were doubled in comparison to exports.

Deputy Anwar Hadeed from Amman emphasised the importance of fighting corruption and strengthening the current judicial apparatus.

Deputy Taber Al-Masri from Amman suggested a re-evaluation of government expenditures to effect a social, economic and political reform programme which unifies national status.

Deputy Khalil Hadadin from Amman criticised Jordanian consent to perspectives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) saying that the fund's recommendations lead to exaggerated economic stratification.

Deputy Nazih Amarin from Karak asked the government to alleviate the suffering of the poor and to combat inequities in government appointments.

WHAT'S GOING ON PLAYS

*Two plays entitled "The City of Sawasnah" and "The Three Comrades" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

*Products of the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation at the Movenpick Hotel, Petra, until Jan. 10.

*"Special show and sale of Christmas crafts at the Jordan Crafts Centre (Alaydi), Jabal Amman, Second Circle (Tel. 684555), until Dec. 31.

*Christmas special at the Jordan River Designs showroom (hand-made ornaments and decoration), Jabal Amman, First Circle (Tel. 613081/2), until Dec. 31.

*Exhibition of colourful gifts and crafts designed by Andrea Atalla at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation, Wadi Saqra Street (Tel. 699141/2), until Jan. 10.

*Works by several artists entitled "The Artist and the Environment" by several artists at Alia Art Gallery, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 30.

*Works of small paintings by Jordanian and Arab artists at Baluana Art Gallery, Gardens St. (Tel. 687598), until Jan. 14.

*Works by Spanish painter Clara Amado at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman until 15 Jan.

*Works by ten contemporary Indoesean artists entitled "From Scripts to Abstraction" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (open daily except Tuesdays), until Jan. 12.

*Display of Christmas gift items at the Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7) until Jan. 2.

Association aims to promote Kingdom's reading skills

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — For the first time in Jordan, a group of enthusiastic readers have established an organisation directed to encourage reading in the Kingdom.

The National Association for Reading Promotion (NARP) will not only focus on improving the quality and increasing the quantity of literature perused in the Kingdom, it also intends to use and "develop sensory facilities, expand individual horizons and participate in the formulation and adoption of public goals," according to the association's general definition statement.

To realise such ambitious aims, the association, established in April 1996, intends to concentrate on two levels, the first is related to expanding the circle of readers, especially outside of the capital, by rendering help in establishing private libraries, and providing, at some time in the future, Jordanian villages with public libraries.

Such an aim could be fulfilled, incumbent on the "financial and social support of the different interested sections of the society," said Lawyer Ala' Armouti, one of the founding members of the association.

Mr. Armouti cited the example of the Egyptian experience, which he said "could be a starting point for providing books at reasonable prices."

The Suzanne Mubarak project, named after the first lady of Egypt, compiled collections of books considered classic for one Egyptian pound, which is the equivalent of 200 Jordanian fils.

With such a humble sum of money, "a person can easily boast an admirable library," Mr. Armouti said. He added that a project similar to the Egyptian one could be implemented in Jordan, "if collective efforts were pointed in this direction."

In other words, if publishers cooperated with the association, he said.

Their second step is to upgrade reading levels by removing literature from specialised circles to the public domain and [igniting] collective interest, stated Attorney Taleeb Saqqaf, executive director of the association and a founding member thereof.

This aim might be achieved by maintaining intensive contacts with thinkers and intellectual figures both globally, in the Arab World and in Jordan, Mr. Saqqaf explained, adding that the association will also conduct public opinion surveys covering scientific, cultural, social, economic, political and administrative issues.

"The association will conduct polls to determine the most popular book of the year, and, indeed, why such a book was popular," Mr. Saqqaf said.

He added that the aim of such an exercise is to increase the number of books of potential interest to the Jordanian reader.

"When both publisher and writer have statistical data, we will be more able to read books to our liking," he said.

The association members will participate in creating a climate of understanding and utilising the various outputs of human civilisation as well as contributing to this civilisation and will include any interested person over seven years of age, Mr. Armouti said.

He explained that including children in the membership is vital as children "are the seeds for any successful project, and the habit of reading should be developed at an early age."

"We are well aware of the volume of work required for the completion of this project [and] we attach great importance to any contribution...of mind or talent so we can maintain the organisation on the track of creation and civilisation," the NARP statement concluded.

Labour dispute to be resolved in court

AMMAN (J.T.) — Labour Minister Abdul Hafez Shakhaneh has resolved to refer a dispute between the Jordan Electric Power Company (JEPCO) and the Electric Workers Union to a labour court that a settlement might be reached in accordance with the provisions of Article 124 of the 1996 Labour Law, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Last month, approximately 3,000 electric workers staged a five-day strike to demand a 15th monthly annual salary as well as a hardship allowance.

However, they returned to work, following a meeting with Dr. Shakhaneh, and amended by representatives

Former secretary general laid to rest

Amman- (J.T.) — Abdo Faraj Abu Al Sa'd, former secretary general of the Royal Hashemite Court, was laid to rest Friday at the Royal Cemetery. Mr. Abu Al Sa'd, who had worked with Their Majesties the late King Abdullah and the late King Talal, passed away Thursday at the age of 71.

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Afghanistan's Taleban push north in pre-dawn offensive

KALAKAN, Afghanistan (AP) — In a bloody pre-dawn offensive Friday, Taleban soldiers gained some ground and ended nearly one month of relative calm on the frontline.

Witnesses and reporters saw dozens of dead bodies in the fields about 20 kilometres north of the Afghan capital where Taleban troops faced off against their enemies.

Taleban soldiers said they inflicted heavy casualties, saying as many as 300 of their enemies had died in the fighting. But the death toll could not be independently confirmed.

Taleban tanks and troops rolled over enemy positions pushing northward to capture Qarabag, eight kilometres north of Kalakan.

"If the Taleban continues to succeed we will push forward," said a commander.

Abdul Habib. "If not, we will hold the line and wait until spring."

The Taleban soldiers on the frontline say they want to capture the mountain resort town of Stalif, the stronghold of ousted military chief Ahmed Shah Massoud, several kilometres north of Qarabag.

From Stalif, Mr. Massoud has been shelling nearby Taleban positions.

The Taleban Islamic militia has held two-thirds of Afghanistan since it took the capital of Kabul on Sept. 27.

Mr. Massoud and Rashid Dostum, a powerful northern warlord, lead an alliance that controls the northern one-third of Afghanistan.

The United Nations negotiator Norbert Hol has been trying to negotiate a ceasefire that would lead to an eventual peace settlement.

At first the Taleban appeared ready to negotiate but has since hardened its stand saying it expected to win the entire country by force.

On the frontline, a Taleban commander known only as Mohammedzai, said over 100 enemy troops were captured.

Several dozen could be seen aboard trucks headed toward Kabul. In the brown fields straddling the road that leads north from Kalakan, there were dozens of dead fighters wearing the uniforms of Mr. Massoud and Gen. Dostum.

By midday the shelling was sporadic and Taleban fighters took tea breaks, others gathered on rooftops for a better view of the fighting up ahead.

Taleban reinforcements sped north in trucks followed by vehicles of the

International Committee for the Red Cross.

"We've got Qarabag and we're moving north," said Mr. Mohammedzai.

Mr. Mohammedzai set up a clinic for his three wounded men in an abandoned house in Sareikhuja, a village just south of Kalakan.

Most of Sareikhuja was abandoned because of the heavy fighting between Taleban and the northern alliance.

In the village Ghulam Sakhi walked down a deserted street holding hands with his young son, Ajmal.

"We are the only ones left here, along with another man," he said. The last of the others fled last week, he said.

"I was born here, and now I am old and have no where to go."

Iraq-bound ship founders off S. Africa

CAPE TOWN (R) — A freighter carrying sugar from Brazil to Iraq foundered off the west coast of South Africa Friday. First reports said the crew of 28 had survived and rescuers were heading for the scene.

The 15,022 deadweight tonne Jahan, registered in Belize and operated by Seafar Shipping of Singapore, was initially reported sunk about 680 nautical miles west of Cape Town.

There was no immediate indication of the cause of the incident.

Weather in the vicinity — a spot in the South Atlantic midway between the South African coast and the remote island of Tristan Da Cunha — was reported fine.

A Mayday call picked up by the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Australia at about midnight GMT had said the freighter was flooding and the crew

were abandoning ship.

South African Air Force spokeswoman Marietta Hopley said the Jahan went down five hours afterwards. Later reports from South African rescue coordinators, however, said the general cargo vessel might be awash but still on the surface.

The South African Air Force despatched a C-130 Hercules transport aircraft to the scene with survival gear and life-rafts, and three ships at sea were also steaming towards the Jahan's last reported position.

Rescue officials said the ships would take several hours to reach the spot, 32 degrees south by 00.45 east. The Hercules was expected to be over the area by five p.m. South African time (1500 GMT).

South African rescue coordinators said there were no reports of injuries to the

crew, who were presumed to be in lifeboats.

Oce official noted, however, that it was "unusual" that no emergency positioning radio beacon signal was being picked up.

A spokesman for Seafar in Singapore told Reuters the 8,757 gross tonne motor vessel Jahan, owned by Jahan Shipping of Panama, was on charter to a London company and carrying a cargo of 14,000 tonnes of sugar from Brazil to Iraq.

A recent accord between Iraq and the United Nations, concluded after months of wrangling over terms, allows Iraq to sell a certain amount of oil twice a year to pay for food imports, alleviating the effect of U.N. economic sanctions on the Iraqi people.

It was not clear, however, whether the Jahan's cargo was part of the oil-for-food deal.



South Korean labour unionists shout anti-government slogans at a rally in front of the Myongdong Cathedral in Seoul. Thousands of workers gathered at the rally to show their support for a massive nationwide strike which began Thursday. The strike was ignited by the ruling New Korea Party ramming through parliament a controversial labour law which workers claim threatens their job security. (Reuters photo)

South Korean strikes spread

SEOUL (R) — South Korea's biggest group of labour unions Friday threw its 1.2 million-strong membership behind a nationwide strike until the end of the year, while the government and employers sought to soothe worker anger.

Nurses at 14 hospitals joined strikes that have almost halted production of cars and ships and that threaten transport chaos when bus drivers and subway staff walk out Saturday.

More than 15,000 workers raised clenched fists at a rally in Seoul, chanting anti-government slogans as they vented their fury against a labour law passed Thursday.

The usually moderate Federation of Korean Trade Unions added its muscle to a battle over the law that gives employers the right to lay off workers, adopt flexible work hours and replace strikers.

Originally, it planned a 24-hour action starting from midday Friday to noon Saturday.

But at a news conference, its Chairman Park In-Sang announced the walkout

would now last until next Tuesday, and possibly into the new year depending on a vote Monday.

Bus services in major cities would be halted Saturday, Mr. Park said. Subway lines in Seoul operated by federation workers would stop on Monday morning.

But gas, electricity and phone services would not be affected unless the strikes dragged on "and are carried out to extremes." Efforts would be made out to disrupt life for ordinary citizens, Mr. Park said.

"If the strikes are extended into the new year that will basically mean an indefinite strike," he added.

The federation is the only union umbrella organisation recognised by the government. Its new militancy is an ominous development that raises the stakes in some of the most serious labour strife since the late 1980s.

petitiveness and secure jobs.

But Mr. Han held out an olive branch by promising a new bill to improve the lot of workers by such means as increased vocational training.

"We will send a special bill to improve living standards and employment conditions to the National Assembly as soon as possible," Mr. Han told a news conference after a meeting of ministers to discuss the crisis.

Unions scoffed at the offer.

"It makes no sense," said Choi Dae-Yuel, a spokesman for the Federation of Korean Trade Unions. "The government has made an impractical offer that will offer no relief to workers."

The outlawed Korea Confederation of Trade Unions Thursday called an indefinite strike by its 500,000 members, quickly idling the nation's biggest carmaker, Hyundai Motor, and closing major shipyards.

Hospital workers walked out Friday, leaving only emergency care.

Car bomb kills at least 10 in Algiers suburb

PARIS (R) — A car bomb exploded near a paramilitary gendarmes' station in a working-class suburb of Algiers Thursday, killing at least 10 people and wounding 68.

Most of the victims were civilians, including passengers of a bus which took the full force of the blast, Algerian residents said.

Algerian security forces, in a statement read on state-run television, said the bomb exploded in the suburb of Hussein Dey at about 1.50 p.m. (1250 GMT), killing 10 people and wounding 68.

The statement, the second on the blast by the security authorities, said the figure was provisional, suggesting the death toll might rise.

Algiers residents, speaking by telephone, said the car bomb exploded near a gendarmes' station.

One witness said the explosion was heard four kilometres away, but the station, heavily fortified with concrete blocks, was not damaged.

"The bomb hit a passing passenger bus and many of the dead and the injured were passengers and passers-by," he said.

A doctor working in Mustapha Bacha Hospital in Algiers said more than 20 of the wounded were treated there and many others were taken to Parney Hospital in Hussein Dey.

It was the second deadly car bomb attack in the Algerian capital in four days and the fifth this month.

A car bomb had ripped through the capital's commercial Larbi Ben M'hidi Street Monday. The security services said it killed three people, Algerian newspapers put the death toll at eight and said more than 70 were wounded.

The daily Liberté said Monday's attack made a mockery of government claims to have gained the upper hand in its battle against Muslim rebels.

Newspapers blamed the Monday blast on Muslim guerrillas but there has been no claim of responsibility.

More than 1,400 civilians have died in bomb attacks by fundamentalist Muslim rebels in the past two years, according to a government human rights body.

About 60,000 people have died in civil strife in Algeria since 1992 when the authorities cancelled a general election which radical Islamists were poised to win.

Algiers residents experienced their deadliest bomb attack in January 1995, when a suicide bomber slammed a booby-trapped car into the main police station, killing at least 42 people.



Firemen Thursday arrive in front of a burning church during riots in the western Java town of Tasikmalaya, in Indonesia (AFP photo)

2 reported dead in Indonesian riots

TASIKMALAYA, Indonesia (Agencies) — Hundreds of troops patrolled this riot-torn Indonesian town Friday, a day after a mob looted and set buildings and churches ablaze in a rampage apparently sparked by police brutality.

The town of Tasikmalaya, 200 kilometres southeast of Jakarta, was quiet after Thursday's riots, as Muslims flocked to mosques for Friday prayers and then dispersed peacefully.

"Everything seems to have gone back to normal. People went to the mosques as usual and there are a lot of people on the streets just walking around," an eyewitness said.

A military official and local journalists said at least two people — one a middle-aged ethnic Chinese woman carried from a burnt out shop — had died in the rioting.

A policeman said the riot apparently had been sparked by a report that police had beaten teachers from an Islamic school. Local news reports said one of the teachers had disciplined the son of a policeman, who summoned them for questioning.

Police and residents estimated about 5,000 people, many of them youths in their teens or early 20s, had run amok in the town, a road and rail transit centre of about 500,000 people.

Troops with rifles and riot shields patrolled the streets past burned out or damaged buildings and set up road blocks every couple of hundred metres.

Car showrooms, banks and stores owned by ethnic Chinese as well as Christian churches were the main targets. The Indonesian Legal Aid Institute, which sent a team to the town, said 13 churches and seven schools had been burnt.

A number of looters apparently came from outside the town.

Military authorities said 126 people had been detained for questioning at military headquarters. The legal aid institute said 160 people were being held.

"Most of them are from

outside the city and were taken while in stolen vehicles," a soldier said. Many of the vehicles were piled with stolen goods, including televisions and refrigerators.

Local residents put up signs on their premises and vehicles saying "owned by Muslim" to save their property.

Rioters had scrawled obscenities on walls against the ethnic Chinese — seen as dominating the economic life of the town. The rioters had also written signs saying "no to Jesus," "no to the Jews," and "police are super-corrupt."

The Roman Catholic Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, which only opened in August, was among the churches gutted.

Three heavily-veiled Muslim women stood looking at the burnt Catholic building Friday. "Muslim people do not like the Chinese or people of other religions here as we want Tasikmalaya to be a Muslim town," one of the women said, refusing to give her name.

Abdurrahman Wahid, leader of the Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation with some 30 million members, condemned the violence and called for calm.

In the last major riot in mainly Muslim Indonesia, 25 churches and a temple were burnt down and five people died in October after a mob rampaged in the Situbondo area of East Java.

That riot was sparked by a court case in which a Muslim heretic subsequently received a jail term for blasphemy.

The Legal Aid Institute said there were a number of similarities between the Situbondo riots and Thursday's rampage in Tasikmalaya, suggesting there might be links between them.

Political and religious analysts say Christian churches become targets for mob violence primarily for economic and social reasons, with Christians — often ethnic Chinese — usually the more affluent members of the community.

Indonesian President Suharto, speaking after the Muslim mob riots, Friday called for restraint among the country's many different religious groupings.

"Believers should be able to be more mature," Mr. Suharto said in an address to a Christmas celebration for public servants and members of the armed forces here.

"Believers should be capable of restraint, avoiding activities which may cause inconvenience to other groups of believers," he said.

"We have to remain alert against the appearance of groupings within the society which could give rise to unrest in inter-religion relations," Suharto added.

The president said that this year had been marked by several "socio-political jolts," adding: "The factor of religion more or less also played a role" in each incident.

"These several unrests should prompt our responsibility to continuously maintain and strengthen the unity and cohesion of the nation," Mr. Suharto said.

The president of this world's largest Muslim-populated nation said that the followers of the various religions in Indonesia should work together to solve and handle the problems faced by the nation.

"Differences between the teaching of religions, even differences in interpretation of the teaching of the same religion, are not an obstacle for all believers to unite in taking the nation to a better condition in the future," Mr. Suharto said.

He said that Christians were an integral part of the large family of the Indonesian nation.

"As a family, we should mutually restrain ourselves and be tolerant," he said.

More than 90 per cent of Indonesia's 196 million people follow Islam but the government gives equal footing to Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism, the five religions recognised by the state.

Death toll in Malaysia storm rises to 127

KOTA KINABALU, Malaysia (AFP) — The death toll climbed Friday to 127 after a tropical storm ripped the west coast of Malaysia's Sabah state in the country's worst natural disaster in recent years, officials said.

A total of 127 bodies had been recovered as of Friday afternoon, 90 of whom had been identified — 82 of them Indonesians and eight local Sabahans, hospital authorities said.

Some 70 people remained unaccounted for, police said, road and telecommunication lines to the affected districts have been severed, and an estimated 5,000 people have been left homeless.

About 30 injured people who were plucked out of muddy debris were admitted to the district hospital in the worst hit area of Keningau, in the remote interior of the state on Borneo Island, hospital officials said.

"It is the worst natural disaster to have hit us," Information Minister Mohammad Rahmat, who is chairman of Malaysia's National Natural Disaster Committee, told reporters after taking an aerial tour of the area.

Keningau is 131 kilometres southwest of Kota Kinabalu, the capital of Malaysia's eastern state.

The state capital was also strewn with toppled hill-boards, debris and submerged vehicles in the aftermath of the storm.

In Kuala Lumpur, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad Friday promised to help the victims and "take all appropriate actions."

Mr. Mahathir, in a statement from the northern island resort of Langkawi where he is spending a "year-end vacation," said he was shocked and saddened at the loss of more than 100 lives in the storm and extended his condolences to the families of the victims.

Meanwhile, Sabah police said a rescue team comprising 230 military and civilian personnel was continuing an intense search operation in four army helicopters, assisted on the ground by the navy, police and civil defence personnel.

Among the rescuers are 24 members of the so-called Special Malaysian Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (SMART), specially flown from Kuala Lumpur to Keningau early Friday to assist in the operations.

The team was formed in 1994 following the collapse of a highland condominium that killed 48 people, including 11 foreigners.

"We believe that about 200 to 220 were hit when the storm struck a total of 524 mostly wooden houses in Keningau, Tuaran and outskirts of Kota Kinabalu," a police spokesman from the operations room monitoring the tragedy said.

Police believe most of the victims are local indigenous Muruts and Dusuns, Indonesians and Filipinos. Although the storm had abated, the weather remained gloomy. Low-lying districts were Friday placed on alert as several small rivers in the interior were still rising.

Sabah Meteorological Department Director Chang Kung Chew said that Thursday's storm was the worst to have pounded Sabah, going by the department's available records.

The danger posed by the storm is considered largely over, but coastal villages still face the threat of flooding as nearby rivers continue to rise, officials said.

Sabah Chief Minister Yong Teck Lee, who inspected the scene of the tragedy in a helicopter late Thursday, ordered civil defence personnel and the state as well as district natural disaster committees be activated to help in emergency relief.



Riot policemen beat opposition supporters during a rally in Belgrade. Fighting broke out after the Serbian authorities ferried pro-government demonstrators by bus from across the country in a show of strength against the Zajedno (Together) Coalition, which has held protests against Socialist election fraud for the past 35 days (Reuters photo)

OSCE envoy: Serbian opposition won elections

GENEVA (Agencies) — OSCE envoy Felipe Gonzalez said Friday that opponents of President Slobodan Milosevic won municipal elections in 14 Serbian cities and towns last month that were later invalidated. Submitting his findings after a mission to Belgrade, scene of daily anti-government protests, Mr. Gonzalez urged the Serbian authorities to respect the will of the people expressed at the ballot box. Belgrade has witnessed five weeks of mass protests since the election results were cancelled. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) had been called in by Mr. Milosevic to review the Nov. 17 elections, and it had been expected to support opposition claims of ballot fraud. In Belgrade, opposition leaders immediately called on Mr. Milosevic to accept the OSCE findings. "If Milosevic refuses, he will bring discredit on our country and worsen the political crisis," Zoran Djindjic, a leading light in the opposition Together Coalition said. Last week Yugoslav Foreign Minister Milan Milutinovic said the elections could be rescheduled if the OSCE found new evidence of fraud. But the authorities have since taken a harder line, after a pro-government rally Tuesday was dwarfed by a rival opposition protest. Prior to presenting his findings to OSCE chief Flavio Cotti, Mr. Gonzalez, a former Spanish prime minister, said: "I am by nature optimistic, but the problem is complex."

Earlier Friday, police blocked about 10,000 anti-government student protesters marching through the icy Yugoslav capital for a 38th straight day, forcing them off city streets and onto pedestrian areas. "The police action came as the OSCE was due to release the results of its investigation into allegations the Serbian opposition was robbed of victory in local elections on Nov. 17. Weeks of carnival-like processions through the centre of Belgrade came to an end Thursday when police equipped with body armour, helmets, shields and truncheons cleared the streets and forced demonstrators back onto a pedestrian square. Observers said stated Interior Ministry concerns over the need to maintain free traffic flows in Belgrade were a clumsy but relatively effective pretence for authorities to begin reining in the anti-government protests. Students and members of Belgrade's disaffected middle class, who have been turning out in their tens of thousands daily for the marches, are keen to avoid violence with the police. Clashes Tuesday, when pro and anti-Milosevic factions fought running skirmishes in the capital before police waded in and separated the two, left at least 58 injured. One man was critically injured when shot in the head by a government supporter. Another man died in hospital after apparently being trampled in a stampede Tuesday. The opposition is putting its faith in peaceful protest and international pressure on Mr. Milosevic, who needs access to lines of international credit to rescue Yugoslavia's foundering economy. Western powers which spent much of 1996 praising Mr. Milosevic for his role in helping to broker and implement a Bosnian peace deal have now rounded on the Serbian president, lambasting his anti-democratic grip on power. "President Milosevic has to be aware of the fact that the world is keeping its eyes on Belgrade," German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said Thursday. "He should keep his hands off the demonstrators' rights and their freedom to congregate. A further escalation won't be tolerated."

The United States, Britain, France and Italy have also criticised Mr. Milosevic and the Socialists. "We continue to hold Milosevic responsible for any violence which may occur," a State Department spokesman said in Washington Thursday. An "outer-ring" of economic sanctions remains in place against Yugoslavia, the last vestige of draconian economic sanctions imposed in 1992 to punish Belgrade for its part in fomenting the Bosnian war. Mr. Milosevic is counting on Moscow to block any U.N. Security Council attempt to reimpose sanctions which were lifted earlier this year as part of the Bosnian peace. Sean O'Callaghan told the daily in a recent interview that a bomb was to have killed Prince Charles and Princess Diana, during a charity benefit concert in London by the rock group Duran Duran. He was sent to London with 25 pounds (11 kilograms) of gelignite explosive and cased the West End theatre where he was to place the bomb in a bathroom stall near the royal box. "It would have worked, it had a high chance of success," said Mr. O'Callaghan, who was freed on Dec. 6 with the queen's approval after serving eight years in prison. The bombing, perhaps the boldest operation in IRA history, did not go through because Mr. O'Callaghan was an informer for the Irish Police Special Branch and British intelligence — the highest ranking IRA member to betray the group from within. Despite his cooperation, Mr. O'Callaghan was sentenced to multiple life sentences for two murders and 40 other acts of terrorism. His release under a rarely used procedure requiring approval of the queen, was timed to coincide with the debate over Northern Ireland. Mr. O'Callaghan, 42, said he was unconcerned about risking his life by publicly discrediting the claims of the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein that it is pacifist. "I could be confident about the prospects for peace," said the former member of the Sinn Fein Executive Council. "But I have sat behind too many closed doors with too many of the present leadership to be conned by the smooth presentation."

China and Russia are working on a plan to increase cross-border trade by setting up a special zone in the northeastern Chinese city of Suifenhe that would allow free movement for traders. The two nations are also negotiating over major deals from nuclear power plants to a natural gas pipeline, but political analysts said Mr. Li's visit was unlikely to yield a breakthrough. Russia has proposed building a pipeline to carry Siberian natural gas to China and is seeking a role in China's huge Three Gorges Dam project. It is also keen to sell military and civil aircraft to China. First Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Bolshakov, quoted by Interfax News Agency, said Russia and China planned to sign several documents during Mr. Li's visit concerning planned sales of Russia's SU-27 fighters. He gave no details. Russia also views China as a key trading partner and both countries have shown interest in upgrading economic ties which have failed to keep pace with an improvement in political links. China and Russia are working on a plan to increase cross-border trade by setting up a special zone in the northeastern Chinese city of Suifenhe that would allow free movement for traders. The two nations are also negotiating over major deals from nuclear power plants to a natural gas pipeline, but political analysts said Mr. Li's visit was unlikely to yield a breakthrough. Russia has proposed building a pipeline to carry Siberian natural gas to China and is seeking a role in China's huge Three Gorges Dam project. It is also keen to sell military and civil aircraft to China. First Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Bolshakov, quoted by Interfax News Agency, said Russia and China planned to sign several documents during Mr. Li's visit concerning planned sales of Russia's SU-27 fighters. He gave no details. Russia also views China as a key trading partner and both countries have shown interest in upgrading economic ties which have failed to keep pace with an improvement in political links.

China, Russia agree on cutting border forces

BEIJING (R) — China, Russia and three other former Soviet republics have reached a comprehensive accord on reducing forces along their borders, the official Xinhua News Agency said Friday. The agreement, hammered out after seven years of talks, was reached in the Chinese capital with representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well as China and Russia, Xinhua said. It gave no details about the timing or extent of troop reductions along the 4,300-kilometre border. The agency did not say when a formal pact would be signed but an accord has been widely expected in the spring of next year during a planned visit to Moscow by Chinese President Jiang Zemin. Chinese Premier Li Peng is currently in Moscow for a trip aimed at paving the way for Mr. Jiang's visit. China and the former Soviet Union clashed along their border in the 1960s when the two nuclear powers were rivals for the leadership of the world Communist movement. The old wounds were largely healed in the late 1980s and fears of renewed conflict have largely been relegated to the past. Disputes over border demarcation were for the most part resolved in 1991. However, technical problems of how many troops would be withdrawn from the border — and concerns by Moscow of where they would be redeployed — had drawn out the discussions, diplomats said. The latest talks, the 22nd between the negotiating parties, were held over 16 days in a friendly and pragmatic atmosphere, Xinhua said. Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Zhang Qidong met the negotiators during their talks in Beijing. Ambassador G.V. Kireev led the delegation of member nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States, according to the agency. The five states signed a landmark confidence building agreement in April during the visit to China of Russian President Boris Yeltsin. Under that accord they pledged not to attack each other and promised to inform the other states of the scope of military exercises along the border. President Yeltsin Friday met the visiting Chinese premier, the Kremlin leader's first foreign visitor since he returned to work after heart surgery. Interfax News Agency said. It quoted Mr. Yeltsin as saying he was happy with the pace of bilateral relations highlighted by his visit to China in April. "Our strategic agreements reached in Beijing work," Interfax quoted Mr. Yeltsin as saying. Mr. Yeltsin, who underwent quintuple heart bypass surgery in November and returned to work Monday, has said more than once that he seeks a strategic partnership between Russia and China. Russia's desire to develop close links with China has followed NATO's plans to expand eastwards by admitting Moscow's cold war allies in Eastern Europe as members of the alliance. Russia also views China

as a key trading partner and both countries have shown interest in upgrading economic ties which have failed to keep pace with an improvement in political links. China and Russia are working on a plan to increase cross-border trade by setting up a special zone in the northeastern Chinese city of Suifenhe that would allow free movement for traders. The two nations are also negotiating over major deals from nuclear power plants to a natural gas pipeline, but political analysts said Mr. Li's visit was unlikely to yield a breakthrough. Russia has proposed building a pipeline to carry Siberian natural gas to China and is seeking a role in China's huge Three Gorges Dam project. It is also keen to sell military and civil aircraft to China. First Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Bolshakov, quoted by Interfax News Agency, said Russia and China planned to sign several documents during Mr. Li's visit concerning planned sales of Russia's SU-27 fighters. He gave no details. Russia also views China as a key trading partner and both countries have shown interest in upgrading economic ties which have failed to keep pace with an improvement in political links.

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Top China defence official steps down

BEIJING (R) — A top Chinese defence official has stepped down in a reshuffle linked to China's string of satellite failures, political sources said Friday. General Ding Henggao has been replaced as minister of the Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence (COSTIND), a key body charged with overseeing high technology projects related to defence. Gen. Ding, 65, was succeeded at the helm of the ministerial level COSTIND by 61-year-old Cao Gangchuan, a lieutenant-general and deputy chief of general staff of the People's Liberation Army. "I can confirm that (Gen. Ding) stepped down and the change was made in late November or early December," said an official of the Defence Ministry.

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Zaireans confirm rebels capture town of Bunia

GOMA, Zaire (R) — A Zairean aid worker and a businessman confirmed Friday that rebels had captured the key northeastern Zairean town of Bunia as reported by rebel leader Laurent Kabila. "I was in radio contact with Bunia last night and people there said the rebels are in town," said a Zairean aid worker in the rebel-held city of Goma, 360 kilometres south of Bunia. "I hear support from Uganda was critical in the capture of the town," said a businessman. Both sources declined to be identified but said Bunia fell Tuesday as Mr. Kabila said Wednesday. Ugandan troops earlier this month thrust into Zaire on what they said was a "hot pursuit" operation against Sudanese-backed Ugandan rebels and handed control of two Zairean towns over to rebel forces. Mr. Kabila said Wednesday his forces controlled Bunia after killing 300 troops in a 12-hour battle and pushing the Zairean army three kilometres out of the town, which is 30 kilometres west of Lake Albert marking the border with Uganda. The capture of Bunia helped reassure civilians in Goma concerned about the rebels' power to defeat a possible Zairean army counter-offensive following the return of Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko to Zaire from Europe last week. "The capture of Bunia is what people in Goma were waiting for to feel more secure. This may mean we can now make more long-term plans," said Antoinette Tshetu, coordinator of the Zairean aid agency Omnis. Bunia holds significance because it is a major north-east junction with a tarmac airstrip, which was used by the Zairean government to send troop reinforcements. Its fall was the first substantial advance in weeks by the Rwandan-backed rebels who launched their revolt in October. Bunia is also close to gold mines, which the rebels could use to fund their campaign to capture the crumbling central African state. But Mr. Kabila said the Kilo Moto Gold Mines near

Bunia, a target of the operation, had not yet been captured. Mr. Kabila has ordered gold miners in a 500-kilometre rebel-held swathe of the east to come forward and discuss the future of mining concessions by Jan. 3 or risk losing their assets. Kilo Moto covers 83,000 square kilometres westwards from Bunia with estimated reserves of more than 100 tonnes of gold. Locally produced gold is exported from Bunia airstrip. Mr. Mobutu approved a new crisis government Tuesday to guide the war effort to retake the east but he retained centrist Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo, who is part-Tutsi. The ethnic Tutsi Banyamulenge led the rebellion after being told to leave Zaire. Mr. Mobutu, Zaire's ruler for 31 years, has vowed to crush the eastern revolt, which erupted while he was in Europe for four months for cancer surgery. He cut short his convalescence to return. Meanwhile, the International Committee for the Red Cross has temporarily

withdrawn seven staff members from two towns in eastern Zaire for security reasons, an ICRC spokesman in Nairobi said Friday. The ICRC delegates left Kindu and Shubunda, in Kivu province, Thursday, said Josue Anselmo, adding: "We will return as soon as possible." According to Mr. Anselmo, the refugee organisation is responsible for some 55,000 refugees in the region. The Zairean Red Cross, along with local staff, is still working with the refugees, the spokesman said. On Friday Kindu and Shubunda were still under government control, humanitarian sources said, while towns in eastern Kivu had been seized by Tutsi-led rebels, who control a large swathe of eastern Zaire. Kivu lies near Zaire's border with Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. Unconfirmed reports indicated that Walikale, a town located west of Goma had also been seized by the rebels in the past few days.

disavowed by Mr. Yeltsin and sacked from his two Kremlin posts. Undeterred by his foes, the retired general and former hero of the war in Afghanistan said Friday more than 86,000 people from 72 regions across Russia had already joined the party. Asked who his supporters were, he listed them: "The heads of small, mid-sized or big companies, the poorer factions of the population, part of the Communist Party's current electorate... the soldiers who are tired of bearing fairytales on military reform, employees in the military industry, miners." Gen. Lebed said the party advocated a "state of law, truly democratic." After Friday's meeting discussions will begin in the Russian regions to name the party's leaders, and regional structures will be set up, he said. In March a congress will take place during which the party programme will be approved. Gen. Lebed was expected to take over the party presidency. The former general said the RRPP would take part in presidential elections scheduled for the year 2000, "whether it takes place on time or earlier than scheduled." He has repeatedly said he believes the polls will take place earlier than planned, claiming that Mr. Yeltsin, who recently returned to the Kremlin after a six-month

Former IRA bomber reveals foiled plot to kill Charles

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The Irish Republican Army (IRA) ordered one of its members to kill Prince Charles in 1983, but he did not follow through because he was an informer for British intelligence, the New York Times said Friday. Sean O'Callaghan told the daily in a recent interview that a bomb was to have killed Prince Charles and Princess Diana, during a charity benefit concert in London by the rock group Duran Duran. He was sent to London with 25 pounds (11 kilograms) of gelignite explosive and cased the West End theatre where he was to place the bomb in a bathroom stall near the royal box. "It would have worked, it had a high chance of success," said Mr. O'Callaghan, who was freed on Dec. 6 with the queen's approval after serving eight years in prison. The bombing, perhaps the boldest operation in IRA history, did not go through because Mr. O'Callaghan was an informer for the Irish Police Special Branch and British intelligence — the highest ranking IRA member to betray the group from within. Despite his cooperation, Mr. O'Callaghan was sentenced to multiple life sentences for two murders and 40 other acts of terrorism. His release under a rarely used procedure requiring approval of the queen, was timed to coincide with the debate over Northern Ireland. Mr. O'Callaghan, 42, said he was unconcerned about risking his life by publicly discrediting the claims of the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein that it is pacifist. "I could be confident about the prospects for peace," said the former member of the Sinn Fein Executive Council. "But I have sat behind too many closed doors with too many of the present leadership to be conned by the smooth presentation."

Tough-talking Lebed launches crusade with new Russian party

MOSCOW (AFP) — Tough-talking former army General Alexander Lebed launched an offensive against the Kremlin Friday by rallying his political troops to form a party he hopes will propel him to the presidency. Some 146 delegates from movements which support Gen. Lebed gathered in Goltisino, west of Moscow, to formally announce the setting up of the Russian Republican People's Party (RRPP). "We shall unite those who share our convictions and are disappointed both in the Communists and in the Democrats," Gen. Lebed said in an interview Friday with the daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta. The new grouping was clearly expected to aid Gen. Lebed, who has practically sunk into oblivion since October after enjoying a political high as head of Russia's powerful Security Council and chief mediator in the Chechen conflict. Earlier this year the former general forced media and political attention when he came third in the first round of June presidential polls and later concluded a landmark peace agreement with Chechen rebels in August. But his abrasive, loose-cannon style and openly stated ambition to succeed Boris Yeltsin as Russian president earned him few allies within the Kremlin. In October he was openly

disavowed by Mr. Yeltsin and sacked from his two Kremlin posts. Undeterred by his foes, the retired general and former hero of the war in Afghanistan said Friday more than 86,000 people from 72 regions across Russia had already joined the party. Asked who his supporters were, he listed them: "The heads of small, mid-sized or big companies, the poorer factions of the population, part of the Communist Party's current electorate... the soldiers who are tired of bearing fairytales on military reform, employees in the military industry, miners." Gen. Lebed said the party advocated a "state of law, truly democratic." After Friday's meeting discussions will begin in the Russian regions to name the party's leaders, and regional structures will be set up, he said. In March a congress will take place during which the party programme will be approved. Gen. Lebed was expected to take over the party presidency. The former general said the RRPP would take part in presidential elections scheduled for the year 2000, "whether it takes place on time or earlier than scheduled." He has repeatedly said he believes the polls will take place earlier than planned, claiming that Mr. Yeltsin, who recently returned to the Kremlin after a six-month

absence for heart surgery, was too ill to govern. On Sunday Gen. Lebed called on the Russian leader, who was reelected in July for a second four-year mandate, to resign. "The president is too ill to run the country. It is time for him to resign and go and rest," Gen. Lebed said in an interview with Moscow Echo Radio. On Friday he reiterated calls for Mr. Yeltsin's resignation. "I know without a doubt that Boris Yeltsin is a very sick man. His return to presidential work puts his life in danger, and an active way of life is not a good thing for him now," Gen. Lebed told the Nezavisimaya Gazeta. In particularly outspoken terms he warned the Russian leader not to "transform a personal health drama into a tragedy for the whole country." During the Goltisino meeting the retired general also called on Mr. Yeltsin Friday to make constitutional changes to reduce the powers of the presidency. "Interior policies and social and economic management must be handed to the government, which will have to refer to the lower house of parliament and which will be set up according to the results of legislative polls," he said. He added, however, that the president should keep his "official status of political head of the nation."

Singapore asks U.S. to retract criticism; election campaign gathers steam

SINGAPORE (AFP) — A Singapore cabinet minister urged the U.S. government Friday to retract a statement criticising the election platform of the island's ruling party, as campaigning for the Jan. 2 polls here gathered momentum. But both governments appeared to be taking steps to cool down the controversy by ruling out official talks over the issue, which temporarily diverted attention from the campaign here. Environment Minister Teo Chee Hean, a close aide of Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, sought the retraction after the U.S. State Department expressed surprise over the row generated by an American official's remarks. A State Department official, commenting on Mr. Goh's linking housing renovation to the victory of his candidates, had said in Washington Wednesday that voters everywhere "should be able to vote without fear of repercussions from the government." Mr. Teo defended the linkage, a key element of the campaign strategy of the People's Action Party (PAP), which has been in power since 1959. "If you vote for a good party, the right party with the right programmes, you will benefit from the programmes. If you vote for the wrong party with the wrong programmes, of course there'll be repercussions," Mr. Teo said. He told TV station TCS5 that the U.S. official's comments amounted to "interference in our politics here" and "really not very appropriate." The U.S. State Department voiced surprise that its criticism of the PAP's campaign tactics had provoked an official outcry here, saying there wasn't "really a controversy." State Department spokesman John Dinger said, however, that American authori-

ties didn't believe any meetings with Singaporean officials "here or there to discuss the issue" were necessary. Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong also said Friday that the republic had no plans to discuss the issue with U.S. officials. Prime Minister Goh said Thursday he was "furious, flabbergasted, floored" by the U.S. official's remarks, which the Singapore's Foreign Ministry said amounted to "undisguised interference" in the island's domestic affairs. Mr. Goh's ruling party has unveiled a community development programme ranging from improved kindergartens to highly coveted redevelopment of old public-built housing estates which could sharply enhance property values. The PAP has won 47 of 83 parliamentary seats uncontested, more than enough to stretch its 37-year rule beyond 2000.

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Hebron — only a step forward

THE LONG-DELAYED agreement on Israeli redeployment in Hebron is about to be signed between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), in a move that will definitely remove a major obstacle facing the whole peace process in the Middle East. This is good news considering that enough precious time has been wasted and a good deal of confidence has been lost already in attempts to reach an equitable and honourable settlement of the long-festering Palestinian problem. But the agreement on Hebron should only be a prelude to hard and continuing work on resolving other outstanding issues between the two sides. The peace process cannot regain its lost momentum unless mutual trust is restored among first the Palestinians and the Israelis and then between all the Arab parties and Israel. The shortest and most sure way to do that is to proceed, after Hebron, on implementing other aspects of the Oslo accords and to resume the final status negotiations as soon as possible. The Israelis should now prove their commitment to the agreements through accelerating work on Israeli withdrawal from other areas in the West Bank in line with the Oslo and Cairo deals. And in the process, they should freeze their expansion plans for the settlements which have been condemned worldwide.

The policies adopted so far by the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have caused the peace process tremendous damage. Additionally, they have gained the Israelis nothing, apart from estrangement and tension with the world community. The lesson from the thorny talks on Hebron is that the peace effort cannot move forward unless the negotiating partners uphold and meet their promises and commitments. Mr. Netanyahu should no longer pursue policies that deny the Arabs and the Israelis the opportunity of making, then building peace and ultimately enabling both to enjoy a dignified life free from oppression, conflict and tension.

To the contrary, the Israeli government should seize on the goodwill which the impending agreement on Hebron will generate in order to give the peace process the push that it needs to move forward — irreversibly.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Rai daily attacked an Israeli proposal suggesting that Jordanian and Egyptian forces take up positions along the international borderline dividing Lebanon from Israel as an attempt to split Arab countries which have recently displayed a unified stand against Israel's intransigence. Mahmoud Rimawi said that the Israelis had earlier rejected proposals for stationing American troops between Syria and Israel because they did not want the United States to serve as a neutral force, separating the forces of the two sides, but rather an ally to the Jewish state, supporting all its illegal practices and illegitimate presence on Arab territory. By suggesting that Lebanon and Israel agree on a separate peace treaty and that Jordanian and Egyptian troops be stationed along their common border, Israel is trying to draw a wedge between the Arab countries, which cannot play the role of a neutral force between Lebanon and Israel because they are all united behind Lebanon's struggle to regain its occupied territory, said the writer. To ensure secure borders, suggested the writer, an international police force can be stationed along the common border and ensure security for the two sides, following the example of Egypt and Israel when they concluded their peace agreement.

A WRITER for Al Dustour praised the National Aid Fund (NAF) for its new programme of granting interest-free loans to small farmers who grow wheat. Mohammad Subeishi said that such a programme is bound to encourage Jordanian farmers to grow more cereals, which are greatly demanded in the Kingdom. The writer asked that the NAF boost this programme to include as many small farmers as possible in view of Jordan's need for cereals and that the fund offer people who live below the poverty line, and who are estimated to be 30,000 families, more humanitarian aid. The writer said that the JD 17 million allocated the fund in the 1997 draft budget is not enough for the NAF operations, which are increasing by the month due to the high rates of poverty and unemployment among Jordanians, and therefore he said the government should earmark additional funds to help the poor through this agency that caters to their needs.

Jordanian Perspective

Arabs should take concerted action to help Iraq

By Dr. Musa Keilani

IT PAINS us to see major world powers wrangling over who will and who will not infringe upon the sovereignty of Iraq, and each playing its own diplomatic game that cannot but bode ill for the future of the integrity of that country.

The Turkish government has renewed an accord with the U.S. that effectively allows the U.S. and the U.K. to continue to have unrestricted access to Iraqi air space in the name of protecting Iraqi Kurds. France has "reservations" over its participation in the operations. And the ensuing debate prompts us to redouble our efforts to do away with the very reasons that allow non-Iraqis to decide the fate of Iraq.

The role of sovereign Iraq and its people in determining their own fate has been reduced to that of a toy and a pawn in a no-hold-barred game in the hands of international powers.

The suffering of the Iraqi people and the humiliation this Arab country has to deal with on the international scene have become too intolerable for any self-respecting Arab to tolerate.

We in the Arab World can no longer accept the stranglehold that some world powers have on Iraq in the name of international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions. But what are we doing about it? Can we buck the world powers?

Obviously not. Not under the present geo-political imperatives of the Middle East.

Beyond that, however, are Iraqi actions. For some reason or another, the Iraqi willingness to cooperate fully with the United Nations and comply with all U.N. decisions related to the Gulf crisis — as reflected in Baghdad's actions following Hussein Kamel's defection

last year — has been brushed aside. Perhaps it suits some of the world powers to ensure that Iraq continues to remain a pariah. There can be no other explanation to the humiliating conditions and terms imposed on Iraq by those who wield power in the U.N.

At the same time, we cannot but observe that Iraqi actions and measures are not exactly very conducive to instilling international confidence in Baghdad's commitment to fulfilling the U.N.'s demands.

Of course we can understand the Iraqi posture when it comes to impossible demands made by the United Nations Security Commission (UNSCOM). Those demands are technical in nature but nonetheless humiliating to the government and people of Iraq and the unasked question is: How far would the powers that control the U.N. make Iraq crawl before they are satisfied? While we cannot exonerate Iraq from its obligations, it is also impossible for us in Jordan to sit back and watch a fellow Arab country being kicked around.

We have been demanding that Iraq comply with every clause of the United Nations Security Council resolutions related to the Gulf crisis. By and large, we have also seen Baghdad grudgingly meeting most of those demands and moving towards meeting others. But, from the looks of things today, the process could drag on for decades since there is no definite parameter to determine that Iraq has indeed complied with every decision of the United Nations.

That brings us back to the key questions: What does the international community, or those who claim to represent the international conscience, want from Iraq? Where does the road end in terms of Iraqi compliance with the U.N. demands.

What we have seen so far does not give us any confidence at all to hope for a return of Iraq into its natural slot in the Arab, regional and international scenes in the foreseeable future.

That is why Jordan has stepped up its efforts to try to draw a definite line as to what Iraq is supposed to undertake further before the U.N. Security Council would decide that Baghdad has fully complied with its demands and it is time for an end of the crippling sanctions imposed on Iraq.

We are not kidding ourselves that we on our own could accomplish that. What we need is a consolidated Arab effort to achieve that end. But then we also have to take into consideration that an Arab country, Kuwait, was the victim of Iraqi aggression, and the wounds that Kuwait suffered would take time to heal. This in itself is a key hurdle to concerted Arab action towards bring Iraq into the Arab fold. However, that does not mean a total suspension of efforts to rehabilitate Iraq until such time the givens in the situations are changed.

What we need today is a serious soul searching among Arabs themselves. What exactly are the demands of the Arab World on Iraq? We know that the demands of some non-Arabs are impossible to be met because meeting those demands would mean external dictates forced on the right of the people of Iraq to determine their future. But let us first define what we, Arabs, want out of Iraq in terms of having Iraq back among the Arabs and seek the fulfilment of those demands before we move on to the international scene to plead on behalf of Baghdad with additional strength and a better sense of purpose.

Polarised Jewish society is 'dangerous and could have explosive consequences'

By G. H. Jansen

LISTENERS TO an English talk broadcast from Israel Radio some days ago were surprised when they were told that "the civil war between the Jews has already started." This was both because of the idea itself and because of the person expressing it. The speaker was Dr. Edward Luttwak, an academic specialising in military affairs who, in 1968, caused a stir with his book, "Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook." Dr. Luttwak is himself a Jew and has spent some time at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

As proof of his startling claim, Dr. Luttwak, now at Columbia University, referred to the relations, marked by antagonism, irritation and impatience and general unpleasantness between two groups of Jews in Israel, the religious and the secular. In fact, there are at least half a dozen issues on which these groups are divided.

The religious Jews originally came from Central and Eastern Europe, from what is called the Pale of Settlement, while the secular hailed from Western Europe and the U.S. For the religious, Israel is a Jewish state, but for the secular, it is simply a state of Jews or

for Jews. The religious, the "Haredim," as they are called, are very strictly, even fanatically, observant of all religious and socio-religious practices and restrictions laid down in the Jewish scriptures — and there are a great many of these — while the secular are very often unbelieving or even atheistic and are lax, liberal and tolerant in their beliefs and behaviour.

A major point of difference and antagonism is related to Sabbath observance, that is, the strictness or laxness with which the prohibition against any work on this holy day (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) is followed. Hence, for the religious walking more than a few hundred yards or riding in or driving a bus or a car or a plane is forbidden, which is why El Al, the Israeli national airline, does not function on the Sabbath.

It is notorious, worldwide, that on the Sabbath, and primarily in Jerusalem yet in other towns too, certain busy roads are physically blocked off and closed down by the Haredim, leading to scuffles and even stoning between conflicting groups equally determined on imposing or defying Sabbath observances — and not only in the streets

but also in places of entertainment and sports fields and swimming pools.

And the kill-joy aspects of the religious observances are worsened by the fact that while the secular could not care less how the religious behave, the religious try to impose their restrictions on the secular.

What is at issue in the Jewish "civil war" is not merely religious belief but a whole life style. A "Weltanschauung," which, for the secular, is stifling and restrictive. So much so that 60 per cent of the Jewish residents of Jerusalem who are secular say that if the religious, through their growing numbers, were to take control of that city, the focus of Judaism, they would move out. And the secular mayor of Tel Aviv, now the object of action by the religious who seek to close down its café society, is saying the same thing.

The most obvious, because the most visible, difference between the religious and the secular is, of course, in the matter of dress. Religious men only wear black and beards and some of them ringlets down the face while women can wear subdued colours but with voluminous garments and head coverings because, amongst the most observant, women are sup-

posed to shave their heads and wear headscarves. The secular, of course, wear what everyone else wears in the Western world.

It is ironic that in general the approach to women in Islam and Judaism is similar: women are considered inferior beings, but dangerous, so both in mosque and Orthodox synagogue the sexes are segregated. And in such synagogues women are not supposed to speak.

Indeed, a group of women calling itself the "Women of the Wall" who want to pray at the Western, or Wailing Wall, the most sacred place in Judaism, are having a hard time because religious zealots, who resent and oppose their presence at that spot, abuse and hassle them.

The secular have no problem with synagogues because many do not attend.

In modern Conservative and Reform synagogues, attended by a minority of Western Jews, there is no segregation. And for the secular, there is pride in the fact that in Israel women are liberated and equal, even in the armed forces: for the religious, though, military service is not absolutely compulsory and both men and women study theology. The exemption for religious stu-

dents is a particular cause of grievance amongst secular men for whom three years military service and many years of reserve duty are required.

Food is another divisive issue and not only the prohibition against pork but also the demand, which could be strict or lax, that food should be "kosher". Meat and milk dishes should be cooked in separate vessels and with separate cutlery and crockery.

Large and very large families also distinguish the religious from the secular since birth control is forbidden amongst the religious. And this leads the secular to worry that in time they will be outnumbered by the religious.

The divisions within Jewry have been formalised into Ultra-Orthodox, Orthodox, Reform and Conservative, the latter two being predominant in north America. With the Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox refusing to recognise the religious actions and rulings, like weddings and conversions, performed by the rabbis (the priests) of the other sects. The Orthodox refuse even to allow adherents of the other groups to be buried in their cemeteries and have sometimes had to ask Christians to bury the corpses of Jews

of the "wrong" sect.

In the Jewish "civil war" the real strength of the Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox comes from their holding 23 seats out of 120 in the Knesset, the third largest group in the House. Their numbers also give them a blocking vote on the formation of coalition cabinets and on legislation, to such an extent that the religious have had the temerity to demand that Israeli law be based on the scriptures, the Torah.

Just at the time when Israel needs internal unity more than ever, because of the antagonisms roused amongst the Arabs and even Israel's erstwhile Western friends by the government of the Likud-led coalition, which includes the religious parties, that unity has disappeared between what has come to be called "Israel A," the secular, and "Israel B," the religious. In the view of the enemies of Israel the Jewish "civil war" is coming along quite nicely because "A" is now identified with the peace process while "B" is seen to be more interested in holding onto all the land Israel needs to trade for peace. This polarisation is therefore particularly dangerous and could have explosive consequences.

Power struggles between Iran's ministries and mullahs lead to perplexing government policies

By Scott MacLeod

TEHRAN — Last summer Jens Goust, the young cultural attaché at the German embassy in Tehran, hosted a dinner party for six Iranian writers at his home in the Iranian capital's fashionable Faramieh quarter. The evening went well until, a little after 10 p.m., a dozen officers from Ali Fallahian's Ministry of Security and Information shouldered their way into the house. As one of the officers videotaped illegal alcoholic drinks and Muslim women who were not veiled, his companions led away the Iranian guests, all of them well-known critics of the government.

When the irate Goust tried to phone his embassy, an officer ripped the handset away. Fallahian's lieutenant interrogated the diplomat for two hours before leaving the premises.

The next day, the writers were released and the Iranian foreign ministry apologised for the "mistake." But there was no explanation of why Iranian

intelligence operatives would have singled out a German for such treatment. Germany, after all, is Iran's largest Western trade partner and a key proponent of "critical dialogue" — Europe's alternative to Washington's more aggressive policy of dual containment to curb Iran's perceived predilection for promoting terrorism. A note later scribbled on a German Foreign Ministry report about the Goust affair asked: "Is such an event still compatible with critical dialogue?"

It is a good question, and Iranians might wonder the same thing. Why would their leaders, who are so eager to thwart the U.S. embargo, go out of their way to anger and embarrass the comparatively friendly German government?

The answer, say many Iranians, as well as Western diplomats in Tehran, is that Iran's revolutionary regime is less a government than a collection of contending power centres. Fallahian's Ministry of Security and Information, they say,

operates as a "state within a state," conducting repression at home and murder abroad regardless of, and often contrary to, the interests and policies of other ministries.

"...Iran's revolutionary regime is less a government than a collection of contending power centres."

Other centres of power similarly operate well above the law. Among them are the Ministry of Interior that controls the police; the Iranian Revolutionary Guards charged with exporting Islamic revolution; and a murky network of street bullies known as ansar

hizballahi that attack citizens for behaviour deemed insufficiently pious. What they all have in common, Iranians say, is a close connection, dating from revolutionary days, with Iran's powerful clergy, now headed by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Loosely arrayed against these militant factions are pragmatists led by President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. The "Servants of Construction," as they are known in the jargon of Iranian politics, comprise technocrats, free market advocates, moderate clergymen, and closet liberals in the government. They believe international isolation is against Iran's national interest.

But as the incident at Goust's villa suggests, those closest to Khamenei, the slogan-shouters whose creed is virulent opposition to America and Israel, lately seem to be getting the upper hand. Increasingly, Iranian intellectuals are being arrested by Fallahian's police and hauled blindfolded to the notorious Evin prison.

Bearded men and chador-clad young women of ansar hizballahi roam the streets hounding patrons of movie houses or women riding bicycles in Tehran parks. One of the most disturbing signs is the heckling and death threats against Abdul Karim Sourash, a famous Iranian philosopher with impeccable revolutionary credentials. His offense: arguing for separation of mosque and state.

"This is a country of many sheriffs," says Ibrahim Yazdi, a former foreign minister who now heads the banned but tolerated Iran Freedom Movement. "The government is not in control of all the factions within the system."

Like many other domestic critics of the regime, however, Yazdi believes Europe's "critical dialogue" can help bring democracy in Iran. He is critical of American tactics, such as House Speaker Newt Gingrich's bill earlier this year authorising \$20 million to destabilise Iran, which he believes undermines the moderates who

favour ties with the West. "What they are doing is hurting the democratic process in Iran," says Yazdi. "Actions like that only nourish the extremist groups."

Is there evidence that Iran's "Servants of Construction" are acting in good faith? Yes, according to Abbas Maleki, an urban deputy foreign minister who entertains visiting foreigners amid the lush gardens of a Shah-era officers' club. Maleki cites Iran's decision last year to award a \$600 million gas project to Conoco, the first major contract given to an American firm since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. "Iranian officials knew it was an American company," Maleki explained. "We were waiting to see what the future of that agreement might be in (political) areas."

Maleki, though, has a long wait. President Clinton, blaming Iran's involvement in terrorism, cancelled the deal in March, 1996.

The Time

Israeli firm planned to sell salt to Iraq

TEL AVIV (AP) — An Israeli company planned to sell salt to Iraq in 1995 in violation of the U.N. trade embargo on the Baghdad regime, a newspaper reported Friday.

The United Nations imposed trade sanctions on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. In the 1991 Gulf war, Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles at Israel in hopes of drawing the Jewish state into the fighting and breaking up the Arab alliance against him.

On Friday, the Maariv newspaper published a 1995 letter from the Dead Sea Works, an Israeli salt mining company, to Mordechai Yona, a Tel Aviv contractor. In the letter, Israeli salt shipments to Iraq are discussed, Maariv said.

"It seems to us that a salt shipment to Iraq should go through the bridge," said the letter.

In a joint statement, Mr. Yona and the director of the Dead Sea Works, Uri Ben-Nun, said, according to Maariv: "There was an intent to sell salt to Iraq after receiving queries from an outside party who will remain nameless."

"We considered the offer but the Iraqis dropped the deal because they claimed the price of the salt was too high — the idea ultimately fell through and not one gramme of salt was sold to Iraq," said the statement.

Neither Mr. Ben-Nun nor Mr. Yona was available for comment Friday.

However, the newspaper quoted an Israeli involved in the deal as saying that Israel did sell thousands of tonnes of salt to Iraq in 1995.

According to Maariv, Jordanian and Palestinian business people initiated the deal and at least one former member of an elite Israeli commando unit was involved in sales of salt to Iraq.

The price per shipment varied from \$70 to \$120 per tonne, according to whether it was coarse salt, table salt or industrial salt, Maariv said.

Before Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu was elected in May, several leaders of the ruling Labour Party had mentioned that ties with Iraq should be normalised as part of the Middle East peace process.

Prof. Sagan — a cosmic figure who helped bond mankind

By Waleed M. Sadi

THE DEATH of astronomer and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Carl Sagan last Friday was a great loss to the continuing efforts to bring science, especially the mystery and wonders of the universe, closer to home for mankind.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Professor Sagan pursued his scientific skills to unravel the secrets of the universe with unprecedented passion. Above all, Dr. Sagan was

driven by his unwavering conviction that life is abundant throughout the universe and he spent most of his life desperately trying to prove it.

Alas, the Cornell University professor died before he attained his prime objective in life. "I would rather there be extraterrestrial life discovered in my lifetime than not," he was quoted as saying to the Washington Post recently. "I hate to die and never know," the passionate professor of astronomy added only a short time before he

died. Even though the prophecy of the great scientist has yet to be proven, there is a consensus among eminent scientists everywhere that there is high probability that life, as we know it, does indeed exist somewhere in outer space. Given the astronomical number of galaxies in the universe, scientists have all but concluded that there is another solar space similar to ours where environment could be hospitable to a life similar to ours, if not identical to it.

In a world totally preoccupied with earthly issues and conflicts, man needs to take time to reflect on the implication of the near proven proposition that we are not alone in the universe. If Prof. Sagan convinced us of anything, it is to put mundane problems in a cosmic perspective. Once man starts viewing his objectives in life in a cosmic context, there is no doubt that many of the quarrels between states or men lose their proportion and meaning. The bond between the peoples of

planet Earth is bound to be strengthened as a result.

We therefore mourn the untimely passing away of Dr. Sagan, not only for his passionate dedication to astronomy or for authoring no less than 20 outstanding books that gained him international recognition and the coveted Pulitzer Prize, but also for succeeding where other scientists may have failed, in making astronomy popular and presenting it in a manner that most people can understand and relate to. The outstanding profes-

sor was perhaps best known for "Cosmos", his award-winning 1980 television series on the working of the universe, that was viewed by some 500 million people from all around the globe.

I think it would be even more fitting to say that Dr. Sagan is better known for putting every man and woman in a cosmic perspective and, in the process, enlightening mankind and heightening his awareness of its true place in the universe.

Prisoner release begins

(Continued from page 1)

in the south in the wake of a remodelling of the government subsidy for wheat and fodder.

Government officials have said that no one remains in detention in connection with the riots and it was unlikely that anyone would be put on trial for charges stemming from the unrest.

Initial statements by officials had indicated that

only those who were actually convicted in a court of law qualified for the amnesty and that others facing charges would not be exonerated.

The amnesty excludes those convicted of espionage, drug-trafficking, embezzlement, bribery, traffic fines, robbery, rape and kidnapping. Anyone who has benefited from earlier pardons are also excluded.

Israeli-Palestinian accord could be signed this week

(Continued from page 1)

keep the most basic of his election promises could have longer-term repercussions, analysts said.

Mr. Netanyahu was voted into office in May with the strong support of the settlers who are now spearheading opposition to the Hebron withdrawal both from inside the city and from the nearby settlement of Kiryat Arba, a bastion of Jewish ultra-nationalism.

But as negotiations with the Palestinians neared conclusion, the revolt spread to the upper ranks of Mr. Netanyahu's own party, Likud, which was founded to defend the cause of a "greater Israel" comprising the occupied West Bank.

Former Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, long seen as Mr. Netanyahu's political mentor, put his name to a petition issued Thursday by members of the Likud central committee denouncing the "abandonment of Hebron."

It was the first time since Mr. Netanyahu came to office in June that Mr. Shamir has pub-

licly criticised his actions. For the nationalist right, the Hebron agreement emerging from marathon negotiations this week is virtually identical to the plan

signed by the previous Labour government in September 1995 and virulently criticised at the time by Mr. Netanyahu.

Mr. Netanyahu insists the new deal will provide significant new security guarantees for settlers while ensuring their ability to develop their community in the future. But few other officials are as openly optimistic.

Israeli press reports said Mr. Netanyahu can rely on 11 of his 17 ministers to vote in favour of whatever Hebron blueprint comes out of the current negotiations.

Supporters of the deal include Defence Minister Mordechai and Foreign Minister David Levy.

Opposition is led by hardline former Defence Minister Ariel

Conference to debate theme of 'crisis management'

(Continued from page 12)

Occidentalism to enable it to build a liberalised dynamic intellectual movement.

Ahmad Rahman Yaghi, a professor of Arabic literature, stressed that the cultural crisis the Arab World was going through was due to the political and social crisis the Arabs witnessed since the 1970s.

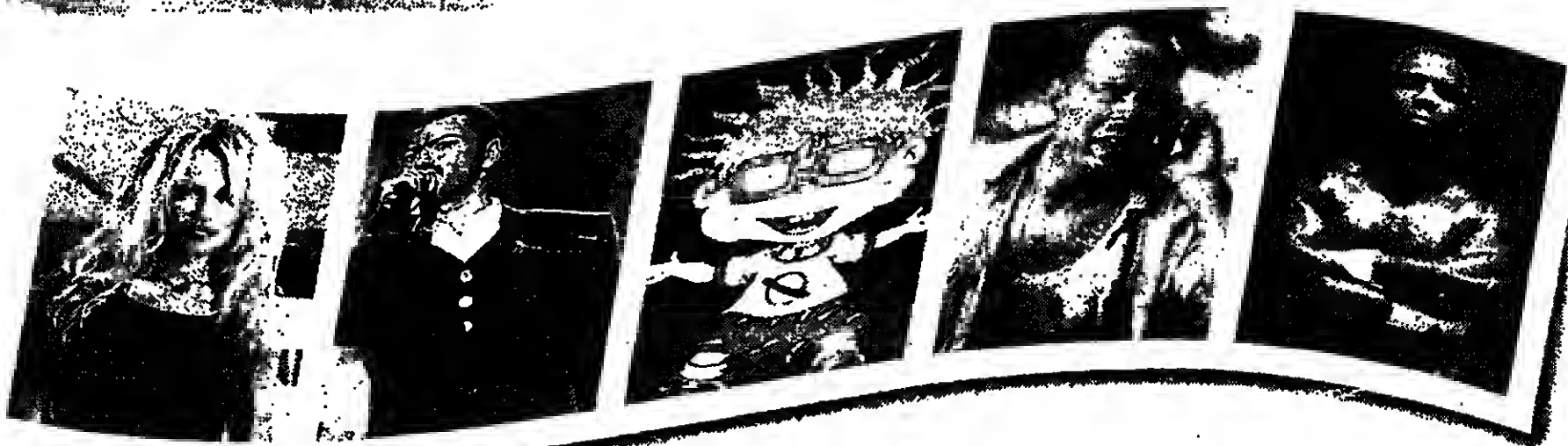
The intellectuals and educated Arabs, he stressed, were undergoing a state of depression as a result of political passivity. He added that politicians control the culture and intellectual dialogues through con-

trolling the media. "Censorship is strong and all the different intellectual activities have to go through the state."

During the 19th century the Arab culture underwent an international siege, the Arabs were kept away from international public opinion and the chance was given to the Zionist thought to take place, Dr. Yaghi said.

Dr. Yaghi cited many books, published in English, which, according to him, contained biased views against the Palestinians and Arabs.

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Study: Global foreign direct investment hits record \$317b

TOKYO (AFP) — Global foreign direct investment grew 28.3 per cent from a year earlier to \$317.4 billion in 1995, surpassing \$300 billion for the first time, according to a Japanese study.

The study by the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) said factors behind three consecutive years of increased direct investment activity included sharply higher investment between the United States and the European Union along with increased merger and acquisition activity.

JETRO also cited industrial restructuring in such sectors as electric power, telecommunications, finance and chemicals, plus improved corporate profits arising from economic recovery worldwide.

Foreign direct investment by Japan alone climbed 23.5 per cent to \$50.7 billion in the same period but was still only 7.5 per cent of the all-time high reached in 1989 before the country's

"bubble economy" burst.

JETRO also noted that Japanese investment in manufacturing abroad hit a record \$18.6 billion, up 35.1 per cent from a year earlier and eclipsing the previous all-time high of \$16.3 billion set in 1989.

At the same time, direct investment in Japan slipped 7.6 per cent to \$3.84 billion, depressed by sharply lower investment in manufacturing which was offset by increased investment in the non-manufacturing industries.

JETRO, an affiliate of the international trade and industry ministry, noted that outflows from Japan exceeded inflows into the country by a "wide margin" and that "no improvement in the imbalance" was seen in 1995.

But it also noted that a recent survey had found that 44.9 per cent of those foreign companies which had already invested in Japan planned to expand their activities while 40.9 per cent planned to continue at the current level.

"Despite high costs, Japan has remained attractive as an investment target because of a large market, strong consumer purchasing power, well-developed infrastructure and skilled human resources as well as increased mobility of workers in recent years," the study said.

"In addition, in terms of serving as a headquarters for Asian operations, Japan remains very competitive with newcomers Hong Kong and Singapore," it pointed out.

JETRO said multilateral rules for direct investment "must be supported in all possible venues" with private-sector views included whenever possible. Such venues include the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

"Moreover, efforts must be made to prevent any exception to these rules in response to moves by some

countries to retreat from liberalisation gains achieved in recent years," the study said without elaborating.

JETRO also said it was "indispensable" for Japan to implement reforms to increase Japan's attractiveness to foreign investors while making a "more dedicated effort" to redress the huge imbalance between outflows and inflows.

"Many tasks are required including lowering domestic costs, fundamental deregulation in the areas of finance, distribution, telecommunications and a wide range of other industries, revising certain special Japanese business practices and internationalising the nature of corporate groupings," it said.

JETRO said Japan also had to "do more" to adapt to merger and acquisition activities and Western-style management and ownership practices while including the entire East Asian region in its direct investment strategies.

AFM trading and prices drop

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Trading plunged and prices slipped at the stock market this week as speculators adopted positions ahead of the new year, brokers said Friday.

They said they did not expect any significant movement before the first week of January, when several major companies are expected to announce primary performance figures for 1996.

The weekly report of the Amman Financial Market (AFM) said turnover for the week ending Thursday was 3.4 million dinars, compared with the previous week's 11.4 million dinars.

The report said 2.8 million stocks changed under 3.110 deals during the week, with daily average trading at 680,000 dinars.

The official AFM share price index based on 60 major companies closed at 151.16 points, down 2.21 points or 1.44 per cent from the week's opening of 153.37 points.

Industrials accounted for 1.98 million dinars of the weekly turnover, followed by commercial banks and financial institutions with 860,000 dinars, service companies with 510,000 dinars and insurance companies with 58,900 dinars, the report said.

Sectoral indices showed insurance stocks gaining 0.2 per cent while industri-

als slipped during the week 1.69 per cent, commercial banks and financial institutions by 1.44 per cent, service sector companies by 0.13 per cent.

Stocks of 88 companies were involved in the week's trading, with 20 of closing with gains, 60 losing and eight remaining unchanged. Brokers said there was little enthusiasm in the market in the last but one week of the year, with speculators holding onto their acquisitions.

"They are all waiting for yearly figures of some major companies expected in the first half of January," said a broker, who, like other AFM dealers, cannot be identified by name.

Israeli budget vulnerable to slowing economy

TEL AVIV (R) — By backing down on key points in its 1997 budget, Israel's treasury has cleared the way to win approval of its spending package but it now faces a tougher battle than before to keep the deficit on target, analysts warn.

"The 2.8 per cent deficit target will be very difficult to keep," said Adam Reuter of Financial Immunides, a consulting firm.

Although Mr. Reuter expressed satisfaction with the cuts and revenue-raising measures approved Sunday by the parliamentary finance committee, he said the slowing economy would make it difficult for the government to meet tax revenue targets.

The parliamentary finance committee approved the arrangements law, which enacts legislative changes needed to fulfill the budget and contained the treasury's most controversial proposals.

To win approval, however, the treasury backed down on its plans to reduce child allowances, impose fees for

doctors' visits and raise medicine prices.

Instead, it agreed to the committee's demand to raise taxes on cigarettes and petrol and approved a plan not to adjust income tax brackets for inflation. The latter will effectively raise income tax.

The panel did agree to cut government investment subsidies to a ceiling of 24 per cent, down from the current 34 per cent but less than the 20 per cent the treasury sought.

By agreeing to the changes, analysts said, the treasury succumbed to budgetary opponents who said the brunt of the cuts and revenue-raising measures fell on lower-income groups. The arrangements law and the budget are now both expected to win full parliamentary approval by Dec. 31.

"The fact that those two items (child allowances and physicians' fees) were replaced by higher cigarette and fuel taxes and a freezing of brackets is no big deal," said Jonathan Katz, chief economist at Solid Financial Markets. "The doctor fees was a

tax by any other name."

But Yoram Gabbay, chairman of Peilim Fund Managers and a former treasury budget director, warned that the "tax component of the new budget is not small," making the budget vulnerable to a slowing economy.

The planned cuts in the defence budget, he added, were not realistic. "With the current political status quo, there is a good chance of a heating up with the Syrians or the Palestinians," Mr. Gabbay said. That would require stepped-up defence spending.

Out of the seven billion-shekel budget package, Finance Minister Dan Meridor claimed to have won spending cuts of five billion shekels.

"That's what Meridor is saying but my gut feeling is that it is less than five billion," said Mr. Katz. Mr. Gabbay said the cuts would be no more than four billion shekels.

Mr. Katz nevertheless remained optimistic. "The important thing for the economy is that what happened in 1996 won't happen in 1997,"

said Mr. Katz, adding that lower inflation than the treasury forecast when it did its original budget estimates last June would help reduce spending.

This year the treasury over-estimated tax revenues by some five billion shekels, Mr. Katz said, as economic growth fell to an estimated 3.8 per cent from 7.1 per cent in 1995. That caused the deficit to widen to 3.5-4.0 per cent of gross domestic product, versus a planned 2.5 per cent.

Analysts are divided about how the budget will influence interest rates. Mr. Reuter said the Bank of Israel would cut rates 1.2-1.5 percentage point over the next three months. But Mr. Gabbay was less optimistic. "The rate cuts will be lower than expected on the basis of a full budget cut," he said. "Real interest rates will be high all year."

Mr. Katz said Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel was more geared towards hard economic data than fiscal promises. "I think he's more realistic than in the past," Mr. Katz said. "I don't see him doing a drastic lowering of interest rates as he did in 1995 — certainly not on the basis of a planned budget cut."

REUTERS

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The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Prices as at 27/12/96 18:37

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.5555	0.5921	1.3479	115.38	1.3890	1530.60	1.7483	5.2590
DE Mark	0.6429	-	0.3803	0.8873	74.16	0.8786	983.23	1.1224	3.3748
GB Sterling	1.8890	2.8279	-	2.2784	194.94	2.3122	2584.51	2.9495	8.6673
FR Franc	0.7419	1.1525	0.4386	-	85.58	1.0145	1133.31	129.43	3.8902
JP Yen	0.0087	1.3468	0.5123	1.1872	-	1.1855	13.24	161.19	4.5441
CA Dollar	0.7305	1.1408	0.4394	0.9793	1.19	-	1121.87	1.2807	3.8558
IT Lira	0.0007	1.0165	0.3887	0.0881	1327.49	0.8944	-	11.41	3.4301
NL Guilder	0.5726	88.05	0.3385	77.21	86.05	0.7636	875.80	-	3.0050
FR Franc	0.1905	0.2882	0.1127	25.6718	21.97	0.2808	33.25	33.2500	-

Energy

Oils	Last	Previous
Brent	24.45	24.25
WTI	24.20	24.05
Bony	24.45	24.25
Dubai	21.25	21.40
UL Gas	214.00	213.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4149	0.15785	0.35867	30.791
AE Dirham	0.2725	0.42405	0.16131	0.36758	31.4683
KW Dinar	3.3358	5.18941	1.97472	4.50045	385.208
BH Dinar	0.3760	4.19007	1.57456	3.58903	307.125
CY Pound	2.1191	3.2984	1.2548	2.8588	244.709

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz)	369.4	369.9
Silver (oz)	4.9	4.92
Platinum (oz)	370	371
Al (3 Months)	1556	1558
CU (3 Months)	2157	2181
Zinc (3 Months)	1075	1078
Lead (3 Months)	716	716
Ni (3 Months)	6500	6520

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-9-	-1-
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.53	5.47	5.50	5.59	5.65
GBP	6.18	6.25	6.44	6.62	6.75
JPY	0.31	0.31	0.38	0.33	0.38
DEM	2.87	2.87	2.94	2.94	2.94
FRF	3.26	3.28	3.28	3.20	3.28
CHF	1.87	1.81	1.88	1.75	1.81
ITL	7.42	7.20	6.86	6.82	6.50

Main Equity Indices

Index	Value	Chg	% Chg	High	Low	Pr Ch
New York	DOW JONES	6553.22	6.54	0.1	6576.26	6543.61
New York	S&P 500	758.99	0.27	0.04	756.75	755.82
London	FT-SE 100	4091	-1.5	-0.04	4102.9	4080.6
Paris	CAC 40	2306.13	2.38	0.1	2312.16	2291.37
Frankfurt	DAX	2852.34	7.31	0.26	2857.31	2845.57

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lb)	117.83	Spot
Cocoa (c/lb)	0	Spot
Sugar (c/lb)	311.9	Spot
Wheat (c/lb)	131	Spot
Soy (c/lb)	21.48	Spot
Tel (c/lb)	125	Spot
Barley (c/lb)	2.18	Spot
Rice (c/lb)	470	Spot

* JOD Cross Rates

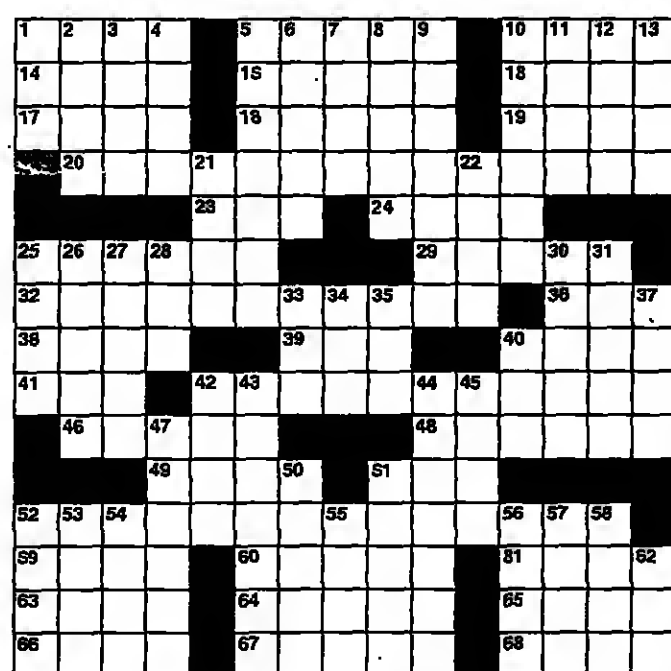
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.706	0.710
GB Sterling	1.185	1.1909
OE Mark	0.4551	0.4574
CH Franc	0.5268	0.5294
FR Franc	0.1346	0.1353
JP Yen	0.6168	0.6199
NL Guilder	0.4054	0.4074
IT Lira	0.4634	0.4657

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

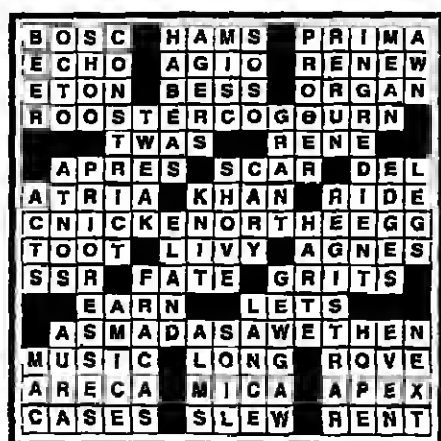
THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Flush
- 5 Weakens
- 10 Gumbo
- 14 A Bartok ingredient
- 15 Synonym
- 16 Uriah —
- 17 Noggins
- 18 NASA rocket
- 19 Soma bank acct.
- 20 First film directed by Eastwood
- 23 Govt. org.
- 24 Portico
- 25 Batista successor
- 29 Seeks
- 32 One of the "Dirty Harry" series
- 36 — premium (hard to come by)
- 38 Tear
- 39 Hava a confab
- 40 Second
- 41 — Paulo
- 42 Eastwood movie
- 46 — blank (be unsuccessful)
- 48 To wit
- 49 Happy, rhythmic tune
- 51 Tablet
- 52 Eastwood musical
- 59 Sports arena
- 60 Breathing affliction
- 61 Footnote abbr.
- 63 Secular
- 64 Appraiser
- 65 Lillehammer medal
- 66 Aware of
- 67 Humming sound
- 68 Dates



by Jay Sullivan



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DOWN

- 1 Let up
- 2 HST, once
- 3 Israeli airline
- 4 Darling dog
- 5 — reference (structure for evaluatio data)
- 6 Rationale
- 7 A long time
- 8 OK guys
- 9 — course (last)
- 10 Buckeye
- 11 "The Galloping Gourmet"
- 12 20 quires
- 13 Church section
- 21 Anecdote
- 22 Par, sometimes
- 25 Activity places: abbr.
- 26 Leading
- 27 Spanish gentleman
- 28 Knight or Lange
- 30 Shelf
- 31 Harden
- 33 Galena, e.g.
- 34 Dustcloth
- 35 Tax man, for short
- 37 Lawyer: abbr.
- 40 Money mach.
- 42 Silly goose
- 43 Seaman's rope
- 44 Out of it
- 45 Nothing: Sn.
- 47 Magnetic alloy
- 50 Up — (acceptable)
- 51 Spruce up
- 52 Game of chukkers
- 53 "You Can't Get — with a Gun"
- 54 "What's — for me?"
- 55 Old preposition
- 56 Playing dates
- 57 English horn relative
- 58 Clapnet's river
- 62 Tooth MD

Peanuts



Jordan signs \$112 million export deals with Iraq

AMMAN (AFP) — Jordanian companies have signed new contracts worth around \$112 million covering exports of food and soap to sanctions-hit Iraq, Amman Chamber of Industry Chairman Khalidun Abu Hassan said.

Mr. Abu Hassan said the contracts were concluded after Iraq agreed to U.N. resolutions, enabling the implementation of the oil-for-food deal under which it can sell \$2 billion of crude over six months to buy food and medicines, the Jordanian press has reported. He said another contract for several million dollars covering the sale of medicines will be concluded in the next few days.

Jordan's Finance Minister Marwan Awad and Energy Minister Hashem Dabbas are going to Baghdad on January 29 to discuss renewal of the trade protocol between the two countries, the press reported.

In January, Jordan reduced the amount of the protocol to \$220 million from \$400 million because of Baghdad's accumulated debt of more than \$1.2 billion.

AFM chief warns companies over delay in submitting financial data

By Leila Irsheidat
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In an effort to enhance the investment climate and reaffirm the commitment to developing the disclosure requirements of listed public shareholding companies, Amman Financial Market (AFM) Director General Wahib Shair has issued reminders to a number of companies which did not submit their half-yearly financial statements to the AFM.

One-month extension was given to these companies before enforcing suspension of their listings.

Mr. Shair stated that starting from 1997 strict measures will be applied to ensure that public shareholding companies submit their half-yearly financial statements within (45) days from the end of the date of a company's half-year accounts.

The yearly financial statements should be submitted within a maximum period of four months from the end of its financial year, Mr. Shair emphasised.

Any violations to these instructions will subject the company to an immediate suspension of its listing without further notice, the reminders said.

The number of companies which violated the provisions of the "Companies Law" and the AFM "Suspension Instructions," and which did not respond to the AFM notice issued on Sept. 8, 1996 for this purpose, has reached (44) of which (18) are listed in the AFM.

The companies included six banks and financial institutions, one insurance, three companies from the service sector and ten industrial companies.

Mr. Shair stressed that all listed public shareholding companies should give the issue of disclosure requirements their top priority, and should submit the required financial statements as required by the law of suspension and in protection of the interest of shareholders and investors.

Daily

A review of news from the Arabic press

Jordan Investment Corporation

expects profit to exceed JD15m

*** MOHAMMAD BATAINEH**, the director-general of the Jordan Investment Corporation (JIC) expects profit to exceed last year's JD15 million as JIC has sold JD28 million of government equity in public shareholding companies in 1996. The corporation is a shareholder in about 60 public shareholding companies with investments totalling JD142 million at book value but reaching JD490 million at market value.

Mr. Bataineh said that JIC was able to sell all its equity in the Philadelphia Hotel and the Aqaba Holiday Hotel in 1996 but was successful in selling the equity in other companies due to disagreement over share prices with the investors who expressed interest. He named the companies to be the tobacco, textile, cement and paper and cardboard industries.

The JIC chief said that the corporation was focusing on the privatisation of tourism sector companies and highly-profitable industrial firms. He explained that the JIC investment was previously holding equity at 50, 60 and 70 per cent of the capital but, in light of the privatisation process implemented by Jordan, the corporation is currently limiting its equity in any company to no more than 10 per cent.

Mr. Bataineh expected JIC to earn higher income next year mainly because public shareholding companies will be paying less income tax (15 per cent instead of 32 per cent) in accordance with the amendments to the Income Tax Law (Al Dusstour).

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"Cool it—those things leave red stains on the ceiling!"

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

KNETO

WYDDO

UNRATE

COORTH

Answer: TO HIS

Yesterday's Jumbles: PATIO GUESS MALLEZ ZENITH

Answer: The result of eating under an elegant chandelier — A "LIGHT" MEAL

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AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET														
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TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179														
ORGANISED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (21/12/1994 - 25/12/1994)														
WEEKLY REPORT														
RING THE LAST 2 WEEKS	COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE PRICE	TURNOVER	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
CH	LOW													
9.500	242.000 ARAB BANK	13.6	1.41	17	3420	357100	253.00	253.00	249.00	249.00	-4.00	241.47	0.32	4
1.250	4.250 CAIRO AMMAN BANK	10.3	3.00	5	1060	5030	4.25	5.00	4.44	5.00	0.75	4.798	0.11	4
1.200	2.950 BANK OF JORDAN	11.5	0.00	8	7750	8493	2.70	3.70	2.12	3.20	-	3.141	0.24	3
1.100	1.050 KID. EAST TRV. BK.	64.3	0.00	108	49350	78952	1.05	1.07	1.01	1.01	-0.04	1.024	0.94	4
2.250	2.150 INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	5.0	6.36	18	40100	76112	2.24	2.22	2.18	2.19	-0.05	2.185	1.48	4
1.850	4.650 THE HOUSING BK.	22.6	2.55	15	32243	152407	4.80	4.75	4.70	4.70	-0.10	4.746	1.29	5
1.760	2.480 JOR. SECUR. BANK	20.3	0.00	53	20316	55853	2.71	2.80	2.44	2.60	-0.09	2.749	0.23	4
1.050	1.800 JOR. CUP. BANK	6.7	7.29	32	61950	49507	0.95	0.97	0.94	0.96	-0.01	0.953	0.60	5
3.600	3.680 JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	27.3	0.00	25	55802	20249	2.72	3.47	3.40	4.00	-0.12	3.665	0.28	4
1.500	3.420 UNION BK. SAV. INV.	102.4	0.00	10	13000	18870	1.48	1.44	1.42	1.43	-0.05	1.452	1.44	2
3.750	3.380 JOR. TRV. & T. (REDA)	39.5	0.00	3	1240	4505	3.60	2.61	2.40	3.60	-	2.404	0.12	1
1.900	1.800 BRIT. AL-J. (REDA)	11.1	8.52	3	400	1061	1.80	1.78	1.74	1.74	-0.04	1.768	0.30	1
1.350	3.230 PRITADEL INV. BK.	-	0.00	27	20703	74813	1.30	1.32	1.27	1.28	-0.02	1.295	0.27	4
MARKET TOTAL														
4.750	4.250 JERUSALEM INSUR.	11.5	4.71	1	50	213	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	-0.10	4.260	0.05	1
7.020	3.900 JOR. PREM. INSUR.	5.5	10.24	19	4893	9507	2.00	2.00	3.95	1.95	-0.05	1.959	0.22	4
2.100	2.050 ARAB LIP. INSUR.	7.2	8.42	5	3060	5898	2.05	1.95	1.90	1.90	-0.15	1.924	0.25	3
5.000	4.840 ALBANK AL-ARAB	14.3	3.57	29	9499	42335	5.00	5.60	4.85	5.60	-0.60	6.087	0.50	4
INSURANCE SECTOR														
1.820	1.430 JOR. ELECTRIC PUB.	11.4	7.32	65	47707	78612	1.47	1.47	1.42	1.44	-0.03	1.448	0.18	5
8.000	7.500 JOR. HOTEL TOURISM	14.8	2.11	2	220	2496	7.90	7.80	7.80	7.80	-0.10	7.800	0.08	1
1.450	1.430 JARJO ELECTRICITY	9.5	6.90	3	2750	3935	1.44	1.45	1.42	1.45	-0.01	1.431	0.52	3
4.830	4.500 ARAB INTL. HOTELS	38.5	2.75	3	650	1590	4.65	4.47	4.45	4.47	-0.02	4.543	0.04	2
2.550	2.500 SHIPPING LINES	11.0	7.69	7	6000	15091	2.50	2.60	2.50	2.60	-0.10	2.616	0.87	2
1.220	1.210 KATEL PORTFOLIO	0.00	0.00	31	14750	17670	1.22	1.20	1.19	1.20	-0.02	1.150	0.96	5
1.900	1.870 REAL ESTATE SERV.	18.2	4.55	6	17000	33952	1.88	1.86	1.82	1.82	-0.06	1.821	0.14	2
7.130	1.580 JORDAN INTL. TRV. BK.	35.0	0.00	41	24785	19087	1.71	1.81	1.71	1.76	-0.05	1.770	0.29	5
1.640	1.480 JOR. EXP. MGMT. SERV.	-	0.00	9	4774	2093	1.46	1.45	1.43	1.43	-0.03	1.438	0.98	2
7.770	7.770 ALARA	9.4	4.27	5	496	3991	7.77	8.16	7.98	7.98	-0.23	8.044	0.25	2
1.640	1.450 MIO. EAST HOTELS	71.1	0.00	9	4774	2093	1.46	1.45	1.43	1.43	-0.03	1.438	0.98	2
3.670	3.420 ARAB INTL. TRV. BK.	4.0	4.10	5	4547	2452	3.40	3.48	3.45	3.46	-0.01	3.464	0.70	3
1.100	1.060 KARKA EDUCATION	32.7	5.78	22	5150	7716	1.07	1.08	1.04	1.04	-0.03	1.062	0.23	5
2.220	2.220 UNIFAC J.	10.0	4.85	157	73850	150406	2.14	2.15	1.99	2.06	-0.08	2.037	1.47	5
1.950	1.880 UNION LAMP INV.	-	0.00	7	3359	3004	1.89	1.90	1.85	1.85	-0.04	1.894	0.67	4
SERVICE SECTOR														
1.040	1.040 ATOMIKOS	-	0.00	1	900	918	1.04	1.02	1.02	1.02	-0.02	1.020	0.32	1
3.420	3.380 JOR. CHEMIST FACT.	15.4	2.94	76	128591	437217	3.45	3.53	3.38	3.40	-0.05	3.400	0.13	5
3.400	3.050 JOR. PHOTOGRAPH KIDNEY	34.6	0.00	8	2496	8057	3.40	3.29	3.20	3.22	-0.18	3.228	0.06	3
1.450	1.550 ARAB POSTAL CO.	17.4	3.48	1	350	2013	5.80	5.75	5.75	5.75	-0.05	5.751	0.00	3
9.670	9.270 JOR. PETROL REFINERY	9.8	8.29	73	7145	45589	9.44	9.75	9.65	9.65	-0.01	9.672	1.12	5
1.240	1.260 MOULIN INDUSTRIES	56.0	0.00	22	8250	10601	1.29	1.30	1.26	1.26	-0.03	1.285	0.25	5
3.260	2.070 INDUSTRIAL CONGR.	35.3	0.00	21	4750	33624	3.16	3.55	2.61	2.63	-0.55	2.870	0.95	5
3.830	3.300 ARAB PHARM. MANUF.	19.8	5.56	51	11742	42134	3.64	3.44	3.54	3.60	-0.06	3.588	1.30	5
1.660	1.600 JOR. TRV. & T. (REDA)	10.0	4.85	157	73850	150406	2.14	2.15	1.99	2.06	-0.08	2.037	1.47	5
1.670	1.600 JOR. PIPEL. MANUF.	9.0	7.24	9	2195	2609	1.64	1.65	1.43	1.63	-0.03	1.644	0.68	4
1.670	1.400 RAPIA INDUSTRIES	180.9	0.00	6	1670	2329	1.40	1.43	1.38	1.43	-0.03	1.395	1.67	2
5.200	6.760 DAR ALBAHA DV. INV.	13.4	6.08	23	6500	33722	4.93	6.50	4.81	4.90	-0.03	4.987	1.15	5
3.450	3.400 ARAB ALUM. IND.	9.3	8.00	31	6704	24476	3.51	3.78	3.50	3.75	-0.24	3.651	1.12	5
1.660	1.600 JOR. TRV. & T. (REDA)	10.0	4.85	157	73850	150406	2.14	2.15	1.99	2.06	-0.08	2.037	1.47	5
1.210	1.150 ARAB TRV. CO. TRD.	7.7	9.08	35	18800	23660	1.10	1.16	1.14	1.14	-0.04	1.152	0.86	5
1.640	1.220 NATIONAL STEEL IND.	-	0.00	5	12200	14440	1.23	1.20	1.20	1.20	-0.03	1.200	0.35	2
1.720	1.590 NATIONAL STEEL	10.5	0.45	363	470494	349679	1.72	1.77	1.69	1.73	-0.01	1.731	7.975	5
1.300	1.070 INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	-	0.00	74	30400	34047	1.17	1.16	1.08	1.09	-0.08	1.121	0.60	5
1.950	1.810 JOR. ROPEWORK IND.	150.9	0.00	2	536	660	1.90	1.86	1.86	1.86	-0.04	1.858	0.18	2
2.950	2.700 UNIV. CHEM. IND.	77.5	0.00	17	3450	10069	2.83	2.97	2.86	2.93	-0.10	2.919	0.30	3
3.800	3.430 ALADOSH CO.	21.3	3.14	10	1610	5919	3.53	3.85	3.40	3.80	-0.27	3.676	1.61	4
4.850	4.550 JOR. WOOD IND. JAWICO	18.4	1.94	1	300	1545	4.95	5.35	5.14	5.15	-0.20	5.150	0.20	1
2.640	2.300 HAZEL CABLE WIRE, NPAC	14.1	0.00	25	3800	10271	2.66	2.80	2.60	2.65	-0.02	2.703	0.76	5
1.090	1.710 JOR. STEEL-CHEN	0.00	0.00	19	6150	4988	1.87	1.84	1.78	1.84	-0.03	1.812	1.54	4
1.410	1.300 ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	27.1	0.00	43	30650	14553	1.52	1.50	1.42	1.45	-0.07	1.460	0.23	5
1.880	1.590 UNIV. HOUS. IND.	5.4	11.30	81	37050	65015	1.77	1.77	1.71	1.77	-0.07	1.755	0.74	5
1.390	1.290 JOR. TRV. RESOURCES	36.1	0.00	62	25212	23418	1.32	1.31	1.27	1.28	-0.04	1.286	0.35	5
3.070	3.070 UNIV. CHEM. IND.	26.1	84	1	39584	614	3.07	3.07	3.07	3.07	-0.01	3.074	0.98	5
1.290	1.170 INTL. TOBACCO	10.0	0.00	114	140000	182567	1.30	1.33	1.25	1.31	-0.01	1.304	1.400	5
3.130	1.980 UNION CH. & VEG.	23.9	0.00	41	21000	20719	1.02	1.01	0.97	0.97	-0.05	0.987	1.600	4
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR														
1443	1179462	1582759	INDEX NUMBER	115.13	CHANGE 1 = 1.701									
GRAND TOTAL														
4203	1665909	2056052	INDEX NUMBER	151.16	CHANGE 1 = 1.441									

Laettner scores 37 as Hawks beat Bulls

ATLANTA (R) — Christian Laettner scored a career-high 37 points as the Atlanta Hawks beat the Christmas-weary Chicago Bulls 108-103 on Thursday.

The Hawks won their 10th consecutive home game while the NBA-best Bulls (25-4), coming off a tough win the night before on Christmas, had an eight-game winning streak snapped.

Mookie Blaylock scored 24 points and Steve Smith added 18 for Atlanta, which snapped a nine-game losing streak against the Bulls and won for the 11th time in its last 15 games.

"I felt good out there and my teammates were hitting me and I made a few shots," Laettner said. "It was just an exciting game. I think it was a lot of things, partly the Bulls, partly Christmas and partly a sold-out crowd."

Michael Jordan scored 34 points and Scottie Pippen added 20 before fouling out for Chicago.

"The league put a challenge on us," said Jordan, referring to the schedule. "We did all we could. We just didn't have the energy down the stretch. We just have to accept it and move on."

The Bulls played without swingman Toni Kukoc, who injured his ankle during Wednesday's win over the Pistons.

In Detroit, Dale Davis grabbed a season-high 21 rebounds and scored 13 points, including four in overtime, as the Indiana Pacers held on for a 95-89 victory over the Pistons, who lost their third straight.

Reggie Miller scored 23 points and Antonio Davis added 15 for Indiana, which won for the fifth time in six games.

Grant Hill scored 19 points and Michael Curry added a season-high 17 for Detroit.

In Dallas, Joe Smith scored 30 points and Latrell Sprewell added 27 as the Golden State Warriors won their season-high third straight game with a 113-108 victory over the Mavericks, who traded all-star guard Jason Kidd

before the game.

The Mavs dealt Kidd to Phoenix as part of a six-player deal. The Mavericks, who also sent guard Tony Dumas and centre Loren Meyer, acquired guard Sam Cassell and forwards Michael Finley and A.C. Green from the Suns.

At Minnesota, rookie Stephon Marbury scored 27 points and Tom Gugliotta scored six of his 22 in a decisive 15-0 fourth quarter run as the Timberwolves rallied from an eight-point halftime deficit to beat the New York Knicks for the first time in the last 12 meetings, 88-80.

Kevin Garnett had 20 points, 12 rebounds and six blocked shots for Minnesota, which has won three straight for the first time this season.

Chris Childs scored 17 points to lead New York, which missed 12 consecutive shots in the fourth quarter.

In Miami, Tim Hardaway scored 21 of his 25 points in the first half as the Heat opened a 17-point lead and cruised to a 96-76 victory over the punchless Orlando Magic.

Dennis Scott scored 18 points for the Magic, who lost for the 10th time in 12 games. Orlando is 1-9 without its starting backcourt of Penny Hardaway and Nick Anderson, both sidelined with injuries.

In Milwaukee, Hakeem Olajuwon scored 29 points and Clyde Drexler 20 as the Houston Rockets beat the Bucks 101-90 to avenge an 81-76 loss at home Monday.

Vin Baker scored 23 points for Milwaukee, which lost for just the fourth time in 11 games.

In Denver, rookie Allen Iverson scored 31 points as the Philadelphia 76ers snapped a 10-game losing streak with a 118-89 rout of the Nuggets.

Jerry Stackhouse scored 20 points and Derrick Coleman 18 for the 76ers, who began a six-game road trip with their biggest win of the season.

In Seattle, Shawn Kemp and Gary Payton each scored 20 points as the



Toronto Raptor Marcus Camby (right) tries to block New Jersey Nets' Adrian Caldwell's shot in the first half of their Boxing Day match at Copps Coliseum in Hamilton, Canada, on Thursday (AFP photo)

Supersonics won their fifth straight, 94-86 over the San Antonio Spurs.

Dominique Wilkins and Sean Elliott each scored 17 points for San Antonio, which fell to 3-16 in games

without injured star centre David Robinson.

In Hamilton, Ontario, Damon Stoudamire scored 10 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter and Walt Williams had 17 points and

10 rebounds as the Toronto Raptors held on for a 98-96 victory over the New Jersey Nets.

Rookie Marcus Camby, activated off the injured list prior to the game, contributed 13 points and nine rebounds in 34 minutes off the bench against his former college coach, New Jersey's John Calipari.

At Utah, John Stockton scored 12 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter as the Jazz avoided their first three-game losing streak of the season with a 99-94 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Karl Malone had 24 points and nine rebounds for Utah, which won its 11th straight game.

In Sacramento, Olden Polynice and Mitch Richmond scored 18 points apiece as the Kings trounced the Vancouver Grizzlies 111-88 for their season-high fourth straight win.

Rookie Shareef Abdur-Rahim scored 20 points and rookie Roy Rogers 16 for the Grizzlies.

NBA standings

Standings after Thursday's games (tabulate under won, lost, percentage, games behind):

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	Gb
Miami	21	7	.750	-
New York	19	8	.704	1 1/2
Washington	13	13	.500	7
Orlando	10	14	.417	9
Philadelphia	8	18	.308	12
New Jersey	6	18	.250	13
Boston	5	19	.208	14

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	Gb
Chicago	25	4	.862	-
Detroit	20	7	.741	4
Cleveland	17	9	.654	6 1/2
Atlanta	16	10	.615	7 1/2
Charlotte	15	11	.577	8 1/2

Western Conference

Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct	Gb
Utah	21	6	.778	1/2
Minnesota	11	17	.393	11
Dallas	9	17	.346	12
Denver	8	20	.286	14
San Antonio	6	19	.240	14 1/2
Vancouver	6	23	.207	16 1/2

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	Gb
Seattle	21	9	.700	-
LA Lakers	20	9	.690	1/2
Portland	14	15	.483	6 1/2
Sacramento	12	17	.414	8 1/2
Golden State	11	17	.393	9
LA Clippers	10	18	.357	10

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Hong Kong's exile takes lead in Sydney-Hobart

YACHTING

SYDNEY (R) — Hong Kong yacht Exile, which lost two hours after being forced to restart the Sydney-to-Hobart, took the lead on Friday ahead of German maxi Morning Glory, but the maxi was expected to overtake the smaller yacht overnight.

The 20-metre Exile was one nautical mile ahead of the 24.5-metre Morning Glory at the afternoon race schedule as the lead yachts entered Bass Strait between the Australian mainland and the southern island state of Tasmania.

"Exile is one mile ahead of Morning Glory, which is 10 miles ahead of maxi Amazon," said race spokesman Peter Campbell.

"They are under spinaker and you'd expect the larger Morning Glory to overhaul Exile by tomorrow morning, unless something went radically wrong," Campbell said.

"They are in ideal sailing conditions. There's a 15 knot northeasterly (tailwind) and half a metre swell."

Behind the third-placed Australian maxi Amazon was a group of boats including the newly-launched cruiser-racer Sydney, designed and helmed by Australian America's Cup veteran Iain Murray, and veteran Australian maxi Condor.

About 100 pilot whales and a number of large

humpback whales joined the race leaders on Friday in their journey south, forcing a number of yachts to take evasive action to avoid a collision.

The green-hulled Exile, skippered by Australian expatriate Warwick Miller from the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, staged a remarkable recovery in rough seas overnight.

After restarting the race on Thursday because she jumped the start, Exile survived gale force 40-knot southerly headwinds and three-metre waves which decimated race favourites, snapping masts and shredding sails, shortly after the start.

A total of 25 yachts were forced to restart and nine have retired damaged from the initial 95-boat fleet.

The early rough conditions have ensured the 21-year race record will remain in place, with the lead yachts only covering 115 of the 630 nautical miles in the first 14 hours of the race.

U.S. maxi Kialoa set a record of two days 14 hours 36 minutes and 56 seconds in 1975 after racing down the Australian east coast powered by northerly tailwinds.

Australian maxi Brindabella, second race favourite, had just taken the lead off Sydney's Botany

Bay on Thursday when it came off a series of short waves, snapping its mast at deck level.

"We hit a bad wave and pop," said owner George Snow.

Handicap favourite Australia's Ragamuffin saw its mainsail shredded by wind bullets. Many yachts survived the southerly buster using small storm sails.

Australian America's Cup skipper John Bertrand on Friday blamed lightweight designs and lower safety margins for the casualty rate in the Sydney-to-Hobart.

Bertrand, whose last America's Cup yacht sank off San Diego after its hit hull crumpled, said designers were pushing lightweight materials and designs to the limit.

"I know what it's like, my yacht literally exploded in mid-air during the (1995 America's Cup) race," Bertrand said.

"Structural integrity has been put on the edge in the quest for higher performance and the safety margin has come tighter and tighter in the quest for speed," he said.

In 1993 mountainous 11-metre seas and 70-knot gales forced 67 boats to retire from a 106-strong Hobart fleet. Many boats limped to a Safe Haven port with their hi-tech hulls cracked and their crews baling water.

Austria's Riegler aims for hat-trick of slalom wins

SEMMERING, Austria (R) — Claudia Riegler's new slalom technique, which has enabled her to outclass her rivals this season, could bring her another brace of victories in the Alpine Ski World Cup this weekend.

Austrian-born Riegler, who chose to race for her mother's country New Zealand after a disagreement with her native ski federation, has won both slaloms so far this season.

The 20-year-old Riegler topped the podium in Park City and Crans Montana, edging out Swedish Olympic and world champion Pernilla Wiberg on both occasions.

"Winning at Crans Montana was a wonderful Christmas present. But I won't start taking it easy now, the season is still long," said Riegler, who lives with her parents in Salzburg.

Riegler has surprised her rivals this winter with a new, more extreme style of cornering copied from the Austrian men's slalom team.

with whom she trained in New Zealand over the summer.

"The way she stands on her inner ski is just incredible," said Austrian veteran

year, she took fifth and sixth places in the two races before.

Wiberg, who is also in great shape and won the season's first super-G at Lake Louise, Canada, is once

ALPINE SKIING

and 1993 overall World Cup champion Anita Wachter. "I don't think I am capable of learning this new technique any more."

Riegler's coach Sepp Weissenbacher said: "Technically we are a whole year ahead of the others."

Weissenbacher said Riegler had learned a lot from Austria's Thomas Sykora, currently the top slalom skier on the men's circuit with two victories and one second place this season.

Riegler said she liked the piste at the small resort of Semmering, some 70 kilometres southwest of Vienna, where she trained shortly before Crans Montana. Last

again expected to make life difficult for the New Zealander. In Crans Montana the Swede was ahead of Riegler after the first run.

"Maybe I will be luckier in Semmering," said Wiberg, who won the first of the two slaloms staged here a year ago.

But Wiberg, whose sights are set on capturing the overall World Cup title for the first time, said her main aim this weekend was to collect as many points as possible.

In the overall standings, she is only 32 points behind current leader and reigning overall World Cup champion Katja Seizinger, who missed Crans Montana due to a bout of influenza.

German Seizinger is likely to lose her lead in Semmering as Wiberg is without doubt the better technical skier of the two.

The Austrian women hope the expected home crowds of 18,000 will motivate them to improve their disappointing showing in slalom this winter. Ingrid Salvenmoser was the only Austrian to make the rostrum before Christmas when she was third in Park City. In Crans Montana, Wachter was the only one of seven Austrian women to complete the race when she finished eighth.

Austria's defending slalom World Cup champion Etti Eder is still struggling with problems with her ski equipment and is suffering from recurring knee trouble.

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PHILADELPHIA "2"
The Jungle Book
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA

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PLAZA

* **The Hunchback of Notre Dame**
Shows: 10:30, 12:00, 1:30, 5:00
* **RANSOM**
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:45, 11:00

CINEMA

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CONCORD

CONCORD "1"
Sharon Stone & Isabelle Adjani...in
DIABOLIQUE
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30
CONCORD "2"
INDEPENDENCE DAY
Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

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Nabil & Hisham's Theatre

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The theatre is closed from Dec. 15, 1996 until the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan in order to prepare for a new play entitled
"Al Aman Ya Ho"



MARTIN HOELLWARTH OF AUSTRIA IN ST. MORITZ SKI JUMPS TO WIN. Martin Hoellwarth of Austria soars through the air to win the international ski jumping Continental Cup competition in St. Moritz, Thursday. Yukioka Fukita of Japan placed second, Martin Schmitt of Germany was third (Reuters photo)

Virus prompts Graf to withdraw from Hopman Cup

PERTH, Australia (R) — World number one Steffi Graf has withdrawn from next week's Hopman Cup tennis event with a virus, tournament officials said on Friday.

Hopman Cup officials said in a statement they had been informed by Graf's agent that the German contracted a fever on Christmas day and was advised by doctors not to travel for

up to five days.

The tournament, a warm-up for the Australian Open in Melbourne from Jan. 13-26, begins in the western Australian state capital of Perth on Sunday.

Graf was to have teamed with Bernd Karbacher in the eight-team event, which is sanctioned by the International Tennis Federation.

She will be replaced in the unseeded German team by 21-year-old Petra Begerow, ranked 63rd in the world.

Germany, represented by Anke Huber and Martin Sinner, were last year eliminated by the Swiss pair of teenager Martina Hingis and Marc Rosset at the end of round robin matches.

The Swiss pair lost in the final to Goran Ivanisevic and Iva Majoli of Croatia. Croatia and Switzerland head the seedings this year ahead of third-ranked South Africa and fourth seeds France.

Veteran Guy Forget will partner Mary Pierce for France after Arnaud Boetsch withdrew last month.

Wihdat-Faisali goalless draw extends Premier League soccer by one week

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Soccer fans will have to wait for one more week to know the identity of the 1996 champions of the Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) Premier League after Al Faisali and Al Wihdat played to a goalless draw in the finale of the 18-week competition.

Strikers of both teams failed to score during the 90-minute match, and the two teams, tied at the top of the league standings with 41 points each, will have to meet most probably next Friday, pending a decision by the JSF early this week.

The first 30 minutes of the match, attended by HRH Prince Abdullah who heads the JSF, Prime Minister

Abdul Karim Kabariti and Deputy Taher Al Masri and other officials, were characterized by extra caution from both sides.

Al Wihdat, who appeared in better shape than their opponents Al Faisali, missed the chance to become the champions after Munir Abu Hantash failed to convert two headers into Al Faisali's goal, opting to hit the post twice.

The first chance was 22 minutes into the second half when Al Wihdat's emerging star Ra'fat Ali passed the ball to striker Abu Hantash, who headed into the left post, sending more than 26,000 supporters at Amman International Stadium on to their feet.

Two minutes later, Al Wihdat striker Jihad Abdul Munim tried

his luck with a ball that passed close to the right post.

The last eight minutes of the game were tense and dramatic, especially for Al Wihdat fans who saw Abu Hantash's ball hit the right post.

Al Faisali had a chance to score in the last minute when referee Omar Bishtawi awarded the team a free kick on the edge of Al Wihdat's 18-metre box. But the chance was foiled by Al Wihdat's defence.

Al Faisali, who appeared in a better shape in the first half, got only one chance to score, and that was in the 15th minute when their midfielder Rateb Awadat shot the ball 30-metres away from the goal, but Al Wihdat goalkeeper Nasser Ghandour managed to catch it

before getting into the nets.

Al Faisali's striker Jiries Tadros, who scored the winning goal against Al Wihdat in the two teams' first leg match two months ago, was no threat in Friday's match, being closely guarded by Abdullah Abu Zamaa.

By the end of the match, Tadros won the top scorer award with 13 goals. He was followed in second place by Jihad Abdul Munem of Al Wihdat and Al Ahli's Nari Yada, each having 11 goals.

Meanwhile, Kuforsom Friday was relegated along with Al Qoqazi to the first league despite a 4-0 win over Al Qadissieh, after Shabab Al Hussein secured their position in the Premier League with a 2-0 win over Al Qoqazi.

United fired by Cole as Liverpool slip

LONDON (AFP) — Andy Cole, the fallen star of English football, burst back into the limelight with a superb goal in Manchester United's 4-0 destruction of Nottingham Forest on Thursday.

Cole, who has not started a game for United since their FA Cup final triumph last May, came off the substitutes' bench to score his side's fourth in a victory that put United firmly back in the title race.

The reigning champions, who are unbeaten in seven league matches, moved into third place, five points off the pace and with a game in hand over leaders Liverpool, who were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Leicester.

Goals from David Beckham, Nicky Butt and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer set United on their way to victory but it was the performance of the much-ridiculed Cole which brought United manager Alex Ferguson the greatest amount of pleasure.

Cole has had a difficult time since signing from Newcastle two years ago for a then British record of £7.5 million (about \$11.5 million).

He lost his goalscoring touch last season and this year he has suffered a bout of pneumonia in the summer before sustaining a broken leg in a reserves game in October.

But Ferguson believes the former Arsenal reject is back to his sharpest after watching him rifle a 20-yard drive into the back of the Forest net.

The United boss said: "I was so pleased for Andy. It was a fantastic goal, a magnificent strike — but then the boy is quality. He can score goals no-one else can expect to score and he is so quick."

"He's come in really fresh and up for this game. He's had the first lengthy

spell out of action in his career and for me it's like having a new player to pick from."

Liverpool stayed top despite being held to a 1-1 draw at Anfield by unfancied Leicester.

It took a goal from Stan Collymore 10 minutes from time to salvage a point after Steve Claridge had given Leicester the lead.

Liverpool Manager Roy Evans said: "The bonus today was that we did not want to get beaten."

Leicester's Colin Hill did a superb man-marking job on England winger Steve McManaman and Liverpool, initially, have now picked up just nine points from a possible 18 at Anfield.

Second-placed Arsenal wasted a chance to close the gap on Liverpool by battling out a goalless draw with Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough.

The Gunners needed victory to move within one point but rarely looked like unlocking Wednesday's

well organised defence.

Newcastle's poor run was extended to seven matches without a win as Kevin Keegan's men slumped to a 1-0 defeat at struggling Blackburn, whose mini-revival continued thanks to a goal from Kevin Gallacher.

Newcastle boss Keegan, who saw Alan Shearer fail to get a single effort on target on his return to the club he quit for a world record £15 million fee last summer, struggled to talk up his side's performance.

"I'm not sure we deserved to win, but I don't think we deserved to lose either," said Keegan.

Troubled Middlesbrough boss Bryan Robson said he was relieved after seeing his expensively assembled side win their first Premiership match since September with a 4-2 victory over Everton at the Riverside Stadium.

Two second-half goals from Brazilian Juninho clinched the victory and Robson joked: "I had forgotten what it was like to

win a football match. It was nice to start the second-half of the season with a victory. I hope it is a turning point."

Two goals from Italian ace Gianfranco Zola kept Chelsea in the title race as Aston Villa's five-match winning run came to an abrupt end at Villa Park.

Chelsea Manager Ruud Gullit said he was delighted with Zola's developing partnership with Mark Hughes that looks set to delay Gianluca Vialli's return to the first-team.

"Franco played really well with Mark Hughes up front and I'm very happy with him," said Gullit of the diminutive striker he bought from Parma for £4.5 million earlier in the season.

Manager Gordon Strachan marked his return to Leeds by masterminding Coventry's third successive victory with a 3-1 win at Elland Road.

It was an incident-packed match for Coventry's former Leeds players with former captain Gary MacAll-

ister scoring one of the goals and striker Noel Whelan being sent off for a second bookable offence.

Strachan, though, played down the win over the side he helped to win the championship in 1992, saying: "I get my kicks from winning, no matter who the opposition may be."

Sunderland bounced back from last weekend's five-goal mauling by Manchester United at Old Trafford with a 2-0 win over fellow Premiership newcomers Derby for their third victory in five games.

Tottenham had their Scandinavian stars to thank after starting their hectic Christmas programme with an unconvincing 3-1 win over Premiership strugglers Southampton at White Hart.

Steffen Iversen, signed from Rosenborg of Norway earlier this month, struck his first goals for Tottenham before a brilliant header by Danish midfielder Allan Nielsen sealed the match.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
AND TAMAR HIRSCH
© 1996 Jordan Times Syndicate Inc.

WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKQ93 73 CAJT AJ932
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
12 Pass 14 Pass
25 Pass 7

What action do you take?

Q. 2 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AK76 732 Q73 AJ45
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
12 Pass 14 Pass
25 Pass 7

What action do you take?

Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKQJ108 AKQJ4972
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
12 Pass 14 Pass
25 Pass 7

What action do you take?

Q. 4 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKQ94 732 Q73 AJ45
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
12 Pass 14 Pass
25 Pass 7

What action do you take?

you hold:

AKQ94 732 Q73 AJ45
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
12 Pass 14 Pass
25 Pass 7

What action do you take?

Q. 5 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AK9 7108543 2AQ10 AKK

What action do you take?

Q. 6 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKR 2AKQJ5 16 AJK762

What action do you take?

Look for answers on Monday.

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Mu'tah University invites specialized companies to submit bids for the following tender:

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- All copies should be enclosed in an envelop on which is written the name of the bidder and the number of the tender. This envelop should be placed in the Central Tender Committee box at the University in AL-Kerek.

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PETRA

MÖVENPICK RESORT

Jordan urges moves towards final status talks after Hebron

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan on Friday welcomed the positive progress achieved towards an Israeli-Palestinian agreement on Israeli redeployment in Hebron and called for speeded up moves towards the final status talks between the two sides.

Information Minister Marwan Muasher, in an interview with the Cairo-based Sawt Al Arab Radio, also expressed hope that concrete progress would be achieved in 1997 towards comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams pressed ahead in late-night meetings on Thursday with drafting the text of a deal under which Israel would hand over 80 per cent of Hebron to Palestinian self rule.

While welcoming the reported progress in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations involving Hebron, Dr. Muasher stressed that what is needed now is follow-up moves to the (Hebron) accord and implementation of the interim agreement between the Palestinians and Israel towards starting the final status negotiations.

He voiced hope that 1997 will see the restoration of the Middle East peace process on all tracks leading to peace agreements with all the parties concerned.

On the Arab position on the peace process, Dr. Muasher noted that the Arab summit held in June 1996 in Cairo had concluded that peace is a strategic option for the Arab Nation.

The chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, also in an interview with Sawt Al Arab said the Hebron agreement was almost final, with some provisions that needed clarification.

Mr. Erekat said the agreement does not provide for the establishment of any buffer zones in Hebron, but will include what has been termed as "especially sensitive areas" in a reference to the areas bordering Israeli settlements.

He expected an executive protocol for implementing the agreement to be finalised before the end of this month to coincide with the return of the U.S. coordinator for the Middle East peace process Dennis Ross.

A spokesman for the Hamas group condemned on

Friday the imminent Israeli-Palestinian accord on Hebron and urged Palestinians to oppose peace with Israel.

"Hamas movement calls on the Palestinian people generally and the heroic people of Hebron in particular to reject and resist such plots," Ibrahim Ghosbeh, an official spokesman for Hamas in Jordan, told Reuters.

"Settlement agreements that gave up rights on the land of Palestine are not hindering to the youngest Palestinian child... Hamas vows that the path of jihad and legitimate resistance will remain open against the Zionist occupation," Mr. Ghosbeh said.

Hamas leaders in Gaza have publicly said they would not use violence to oppose the self-rule deal between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel. The Hamas leadership in Palestinian ruled areas and abroad are believed to be divided over the issue of violence.

Hamas was subjected to tough Israeli and Palestinian crackdowns after it carried out four suicide bombings in Israel in February and March that killed 59 people.

Amman forum ends today with focus on 'Crisis Management and the Democratic Choice'

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — "Crisis Management and the Democratic Choice" in Jordan is the key theme for debate at a six-day conference that concludes here today (Saturday) after discussing issues such as political options, Jordanian-Palestinian relations and free market economy.

The conference, titled "The Dialogue of Options" and organised by the Jordan Writers Association (JWA), is attended by members of Parliament, senior leaders of political parties and political analysts as well as academicians among others.

The subject discussed on Thursday as the presence or non-existence of an Arab culture representing social structure and spiritual values of the Arab people and the ability of such a culture to face up to the challenges of other emerging cultures in the new capitalistic world order.

Mohammed Tarawneh, an anthropologist at Yarmouk University, posed a question when he said: "Are we the challengers? And who are we challenging?"

He stressed that if by using the word "we," the observers, organisers and activists are referring to the Arabs and the Arab culture and that their adversary is the West, including Israel, then "we are committing a

mistake." Dr. Tarawneh asserted that the Arabs were not contributing to their own culture and that they were importing everything.

He stressed that the relationships between the farmer and landowner, the worker and industrialists, and employees and civil institutions were all "imported concepts of capitalism," which, he said, the Arab World has been utilising before entering the new order.

Dr. Tarawneh stressed that if the Arab culture was merely the social organisation, the family and the tribe, then "we are not different culturally...in my point of view culture means a different ideology."

Ahmad Madi, dean of the post-graduate faculty at the University of Jordan, said that any given culture should be able to confront "the mythical legends, enforce scientific and critical thinking and stand up to the negative phenomena of passivity as well as the beliefs in supernatural forces."

He stressed that politics and culture were inseparable, and that politics use culture for its own aims. "The dominating culture of any given region is that of the ruling elites," he said, stressing that there was an ongoing struggle among the different social classes of the society. Nevertheless, he added, the outcome of

this "regional culture" is also affected by the whole human cultural process.

Dr. Madi said he believed that one could not differentiate between the original internal specifics of any given culture and "imported global influences."

"The global village, which opens the different cultures to each other, is bound to create one common humanitarian culture because what unites humans together is far much stronger than what divides them," Dr. Madi said.

Hisham Gbassieb stressed that the Arabs believed that their culture was being challenged by the European capitalist culture. "The creation of Israel on the Palestinian soil and the American control of Arab oil lead us to believe that the West is imposing its culture on us," he said.

"If the Arab World would like to face up to these challenges, it should understand the cultural revolution of the West by building a dynamically critical scientific way of thinking," he said.

Dr. Gbassieb stressed that the Arab civilisation which is now on the fringes of history or even outside the process of history, is a pre-scientific culture, which should study what he called

(Continued on page 7)



SEARCH FOR ASSAILANTS: An Israeli soldier gives his comrade a lift over a wall as they search for Palestinians who threw several petrol bombs at a Jewish settlement in the heart of Hebron on Friday amid reports that Israel and the Palestinian National Authority were close to sealing an agreement on Israeli redeployment in the West Bank town (Reuters photo)

Mahdi arrives in Cairo on first leg of Arab and foreign tour

CAIRO (AFP) — Former Sudanese Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi, who fled his homeland for Eritrea this month, arrived here Friday on the opening leg of a three-month tour of Arab and European countries.

The Sudanese opposition leader told reporters at the airport that he planned to discuss "the future of relations between the Egyptian and Sudanese peoples" during his talks here with Egyptian officials.

Mr. Mahdi said his visit to Egypt, his first since 1987, would be the first stop on a world tour aimed at "explaining the Sudanese cause and obtaining as much assistance and support as possible for the Sudanese people."

"The Sudanese people are going through difficult times," he said, "and we are hoping that our brothers in Egypt adopt a positive attitude."

Mr. Mahdi said he fled Sudan on Dec. 10 "to prevent the Sudanese regime from using me as a hostage."

"After my tour, I'll decide where I'm going to live," he said.

Sudan's first democratically elected prime minister, Mr. Mahdi was toppled in a bloodless military coup in 1989 which brought a military junta led by Omar Al Bashir to power.

The Egyptian government newspaper Al Ahram on Friday quoted Egyptian Culture Minister Yousef Wali as saying that Mr.

Mahdi's visit to Cairo was taking place at the request of the Sudanese opposition leader.

"Egypt wants to maintain relations with Sudan while totally respecting the sovereignty of our neighbour and the right of its people to choose their own rulers," said Mr. Wali.

Egypt's relations with Mr. Mahdi's Umma opposition party have been strained and Cairo has reservations about the party's alliance with rebels in the south of the country and its close ties with Eritrea.

Civil war has been raging for more than a decade in Sudan with the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army led by Colonel John Garang fighting to end Islamic domination of the mainly animist and Christian south.

A senior Egyptian official said late Thursday that Egypt opposes an arms embargo against Sudan because it would mainly benefit the rebels in the south.

"In spite of our opposition to the policies of the Sudanese regime, we reject the imposition of an arms embargo on Sudan because such an embargo would deprive the government of arms but would not block the provision of arms to southern secessionists," Osama Al Baz, advisor to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, was quoted by the MENA news agency as saying.

Mr. Baz said: "For the first time since Sudan

became independent in 1956, a Sudanese government has adopted a policy which endangers Egypt's national security."

"There is proof that the Sudanese government is continuing its efforts to destabilise Egyptian national security, just as it harbours Egyptians involved in terrorist acts," Mr. Baz said.

The United Nations imposed diplomatic sanctions on Sudan in May for not extraditing three Egyptian militants to Ethiopia after an assassination attempt there against Mr. Mubarak in 1995.

But the United Nations recently delayed a planned increase in sanctions against Sudan, which was demanded by the United States.

Mr. Baz also accused Iran of "involvement in acts affecting Egyptian security," saying that the Egyptian authorities will soon disclose information on the matter.

He also said that "Egypt is not concerned by dams built by Ethiopia because it is a friendly country which seeks to maximise the use of its share of the Nile waters."

"Egypt is ready to provide expertise to develop the water resources of Ethiopia and all the other Nile basin countries," Mr. Baz said.

"Stability and development in African countries strengthens Egypt's national security," he said.

Bahrain police break up protest

NICOSIA (AFP) — Riot police on Friday dispersed thousands of Shiite Muslims at Friday prayers in Manama after authorities closed most Shiite mosques in the Bahraini capital, residents said.

Before weekly prayers at the Ras Al Roman Mosque, the faithful shouted slogans demanding the restoration of parliament, dissolved in 1975, and the release of detainees, including Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, the main leader of the Shiite opposition who was arrested at the beginning of 1996.

The authorities then ordered Shiite leaders to stop political preaching in the mosques after the resumption in late December 1995 of demonstrations prompted by the Shiite opposition.

At the beginning of prayers Friday, riot police dispersed the protesters with rubber bullets and tear-gas, and hundreds of people passed out, residents contacted from Nicosia said. During the attack, Seyyed Jawad Al Wedai, one of the top Shiite religious leaders, was manhandled by the police, residents said.

For the third Friday in a row, the authorities closed most of the Shiite mosques, notably those of Al Sadoq, in the Manama neighbourhood of Al Qufal, Karbabad, west of the capital, and Diraz, even farther west, were also closed, forcing Shiite Muslims who wanted to attend prayers to go to Ras Al Roman, Manama's largest Shiite mosque, which is near the British embassy.

The mosques were closed to head off anti-government demonstrations as part of security measures taken ahead of the national day, Dec. 16. An official Bahraini spokesman said Sunday that the situation in the archipelago was completely stable but conceded that there were a few individual attempts at destabilisation.

Qatari call

Qatar called on Bahrain on Friday to halt a hostile media campaign, on the eve of their Cairo meeting aimed at lowering tension stemming from a decades-old territorial dispute.

"We sincerely desire to see Manama change its position and end its fierce campaign against Qatar," said the Qatari newspaper Al Raya, which reflects the official viewpoint.

"Doha has provided every possible proof of a plot by Bahrain to destabilise Qatar... and has documents proving its sovereignty" over the Hawar islands, now controlled by Bahrain, and Fash Al Dibul rocks, in the Gulf, the newspaper said.

Al Raya said that the point of the Cairo meeting was "to clear up the atmosphere between Qatar and Bahrain and not to settle their territorial conflict."

The meeting between the Qatari and Bahraini foreign ministers will be held in the presence of their counterparts from the other four Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members — Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

After Manama boycotted the GCC summit at the beginning of December because of tension with Qatar, the GCC decided to form a committee of the four other members, which are not involved in the conflict, to end the tension.

Relations between Bahrain and Qatar, which were already tense, deteriorated after the announcement at the beginning of this month of the arrest of two Qataris by Bahrain for spying.

The two were sentenced Wednesday to three years each in prison.

COLUMN 8

Di flies secretly to sunshine hideaway

LONDON (R) — Princess Diana slipped out of Britain secretly to spend Christmas soaking in the sunshine on her favourite Caribbean holiday island of Barbuda, newspapers said. Diana, divorced from her-to-be-throne Prince Charles, turned down an invitation from Queen Elizabeth to a royal family Christmas gathering at Sandringham estate in eastern England. Newspapers said the princess, 35, flew off with her personal assistant, Victoria Mendenham, 27. The Daily Mail said she slipped out aboard a flight to Antigua, en route to Barbuda, "without anyone noting her presence, choosing to travel economy rather than first class."

Netanyahu's sacked nanny sues for back pay

TEL AVIV (R) — Benjamin Netanyahu's disgruntled ex-nanny, fired last July after scorching soup, is suing the Israeli prime minister and his wife for more than \$36,000 in back pay, her attorney said. South African-born Tanya Shaw, 21, said in a petition to a labour court that Netanyahu and his wife Sara did not pay overtime and for work on the Sabbath, as required by law. Shaw said in several interviews after her dismissal in July that Mrs. Netanyahu was obsessed with cleanliness, had called her "a murderer" and tossed her out for burning soup in the kitchen.

Priests robbed at St. Patrick's on Christmas

NEW YORK (R) — Robbers held up two priests at New York City's famous St. Patrick's Cathedral at Christmas and stole \$175, police said. The two thieves followed the two priests inside the foyer of the Roman Catholic Cathedral's rectory, located in midtown Manhattan behind the landmark church on Fifth Avenue, a few minutes before midnight on Wednesday, police said. One of the men brandished a gun and announced it was a robbery, police said.

Rare white rhino killed in Louisiana

BROUSSARD (R) — A white rhinoceros, one of the world's most endangered species, was killed after it escaped from a private zoo near Broussard and charged one of the men trying to capture it. The rampaging 2,250 kilograms female was shot by the zoo veterinarian as it charged within five metres of him, said Casey Lamb, general curator of the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, zoo who had been in to try to tranquilise the animal. Lamb said there were thought to be less than 2,000 white rhinoceroses left in the world.

'Friends' ends

BURBANK (AP) — "Friends," the salary saga, has ended. After months of negotiations, Warner Bros. Television has signed a new contract with the entire cast of the hit comedy through the 1999-2000 season, a studio spokesman said. Warner Bros. declined to comment on the terms of the new contract. But sources told Daily Variety the six cast members will get roughly \$75,000 per episode for this season, an increase from the \$30,000 to \$35,000 cast members got for the first two seasons. The cast members will earn \$120,000 per episode in three years. Cast members Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, Matthew Perry and David Schwimmer said last July they wanted more money after Warner's Syndication arm sold reruns of the hit TV stations for about \$4 million per episode. The cast agreed to terms of the contract two months ago.

Australian nurse's family will not seek clemency if Britons convicted in S. Arabia

LONDON (AP) — The family of an Australian nurse slain in Saudi Arabia will not seek to save two accused Britons from execution if they are sentenced for murder, according to news reports.

Frank Gilford, brother of murder victim Yvonne Gilford, was quoted by the London newspaper the Express as saying: "Whatever happens, whether the death penalty or if they are sent to jail for the rest of their lives, it would be their just deserts. But we are not going to intervene."

The Times of London

quoted the family of 31-year-old Lucille McLauchlan from Dundee, Scotland — one of the two accused British nurses — as saying she has told them in a telephone call from the prison in Dhahran where she is being held that she is innocent.

Saudi authorities on Tuesday charged Ms. McLauchlan and Deborah Kim Parry, 41, from England, with murdering, 52 Gilford.

If convicted, the two Britons could face public execution by beheading under Saudi Arabia's Islamic law. Clemency in

the event of a guilty verdict is in the hands of the victim's family, who under the law can appeal to the sentencing court for mercy.

But the Times quoted Gilford, a 59-year-old stockman and cattle worker, as saying at his home in Jamestown, South Australia: "I believe there is a security video of the girls using Yvonne's credit cards and to me that is pretty conclusive evidence, as they must have got the cards before her room was sealed off."

"If you do something wrong in a foreign country, you have to abide by the rules and punishments of that nation."

Yvonne Gilford's body was found Dec. 11 in her room at the King Fahd military medical complex in Dhahran where all three women worked as expatriate nurses. She had been stabbed and smothered.

The London newspaper the Daily Telegraph quoted Stanley McLauchlan, Ms. McLauchlan's father, as saying: "She has assured us of her innocence and said that she was being well treated by the Saudi authorities."

Dundee teaching hospi-

als, which includes Dundee's King's Cross Hospital where Ms. McLauchlan worked as a nurse in the AIDS unit before its closure this year, said in a statement: "Lucille McLauchlan was dismissed in May 1996 by Dundee teaching hospitals for gross misconduct following a police investigation."

The statement did not give the nature of the alleged misconduct but the times said the allegations against her were understood to centre on the theft of credit cards from patients.

Egyptian probe centres on MP

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian Member of Parliament (MP) Ali Fath Al Bab has been accused of leading a group of Muslim Brothers, 40 of whom were recently arrested, to incite disturbances before the spring municipal elections, a judiciary official said. An investigation begun by prosecutors Thursday concerning 40 Muslim Brothers arrested in the southern Cairo suburb of Helwan (see page 2) showed that they were part of a group of 49 run by Mr. Fath Al Bab, the only member of parliament who belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood.